



# Preservation and Recreation Needs Assessment and Action Plan

Franklin Township,  
Somerset County, New Jersey  
January 31, 2012



Brandstetter Carroll Inc.  
ARCHITECTS. ENGINEERS. PLANNERS



## Acknowledgements

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# Preservation and Recreation Needs Assessment and Action Plan Franklin Township, New Jersey



## Executive Summary

### Trust Fund Background

In 1998, the voters of Franklin Township approved a referendum which established the Open Space, Recreation and Farm Land and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. The Trust Fund may be used for the following: (Pursuant to NJ Law NJSA:40:12-15.7.A(1)):

- Acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes;
- Development of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes;
- Maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes;
- Historic preservation of historic properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas, or objects, and the acquisition of such properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas, or objects for historic preservation purposes; or
- Payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred by a municipality for any of the purposes set forth.

To date, the Fund has been primarily used for open space acquisition, farm land preservation, and on a limited basis for historic preservation. Recently, the Township Council has approved expenditures from the Trust Fund for recreation development of Middlebush Park and the Little League Complex. This change in the use of the funds has sparked debate on the future of the Trust Fund among proponents for use of the fund for the various allowed uses. For example, the development of Middlebush Park has been discussed for over a decade.

### Project Purpose

The discussions pertaining to the use of the Trust Fund caused Township Council to need two informational pieces to be used in their decision making process. First is a Recreation Needs Assessment that would be accomplished

in a statistically valid and comprehensive manner to identify the true recreation needs of the Township. The second item is an evaluation of the amount of funds needed for the various competing uses of the Trust Fund along with strategies for the use of the Fund to meet those needs.

### The Existing Parks and Recreation Landscape in Franklin Township

The residents of Franklin Township, New Jersey are offered a wide variety of parks, recreation facilities, and programs. The community's needs are currently being met by community parks offered by the Township, County, school facilities, State Parks, and other facilities within the County. The Township owns 54 sites totaling 2,283.88 acres. Of this total, approximately 108.88 acres at 19 sites are "developed", meaning it is used for active or passive recreation.

The Somerset County Park Commission has 1,003 acres of park land within Franklin Township with 730 acres being developed. Of the 730 acres, 525 acres are golf courses. These parks include Colonial Park, Quail Brook Golf Course and Park, Spooky Brook Golf Course, and undeveloped land at the Speiden and Hoebel Farm sites.

The Franklin Township School Board owns 345 acres of which 42 acres are developed as active recreation that is available to the public or used for recreation leagues. These facilities are at ten sites

The State of New Jersey owns 4,114.4 acres at five sites of which 50 acres are used for active or passive recreation. The largest of these is the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site with 3307 acres. The main developed facility is the D&R Canal Trail.

Privately owned recreation facilities in the Township total 137.78 acres at 45 sites with 72 acres being developed. Most of these sites are small homeowner association or apartment sites with the main facilities including tennis courts, swimming pools, and playgrounds. Some privately owned recreation facilities include the Cedar Hill Swim Club, Jersey Knights Soccer Complex, Pillar of Fire/Nike Soccer Complex, Soccer Center, Protec Hockey Ponds indoor ice facility, and two private schools at Cedar Hill Prep and Rutgers Prep. Although these facilities are not available to the general public, they do meet some of the demand for facilities. The homeowner and apartment facilities provide close-to-home mini-park or neighborhood park facilities and the larger private athletic facilities provide fields for higher competition level athletic leagues.

### The Need for a Plan

The population of Franklin Township has increased considerably over the last two decades from 42,780 residents in 1990 to 50,903 in 2000 to 62,300 in 2010. Although the amount of Township-owned open space has increased, the amount of park and recreation space has increased minimally. In addition, the athletic leagues participation numbers are increasing but the amount of fields available for games and practices have not increased. This results in the overuse of existing fields leading to unacceptable field conditions.

The Township has taken some stock in its open space and recreation needs by preparing the: Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2000, Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan in 2007, Canal Access Vision and Strategic Plan in 2009, 2006 Township Master Plan, Pathways and Trails Plan in 2008, Southern Park Survey Report in 2009, other studies, and a review of benchmarking of New Jersey communities prepared for Middletown Township by Brandstetter Carroll Inc. in 2008. This benchmarking indicated that Franklin Township budgeted much less per capita than the average of other communities, provided considerably less acres of developed park land, and provided

less fields for the population. Summaries of previous documents are included in Appendix A.

Another factor to consider is the distribution of the Township's population. While much of the land area is rural, pockets in the northeast (Wards 4 and 5) and in the Franklin Park area are very dense. The distribution of recreation facilities needed to be evaluated to identify the gaps in where facilities are located.

All of these factors and the desire to improve the quality of life for present and future residents of Franklin Township caused the Township Council to realize the need for a comprehensive process to identify the true needs of the community so that Franklin Township can be in a position to meet those needs in the future.

The first phase of the planning process was to identify the community needs through an extensive public input process, comparison to other communities, and identification of regional and national trends in parks and recreation services. The process continued with an approach of identifying specific strategies to provide for the needs of as many residents as possible in the most efficient manner.

### A Citizen Driven Plan

A concerted effort was made throughout the development of this Plan to elicit input from the public and from the various committees and commissions that serve the Township. The following methods were employed to generate public input and involvement of the public and various groups:

- **Development of Scope and RFP for the Plan** - After an initial draft scope (outline) for the Plan was developed by the Steering Committee, the draft scope (outline) was distributed to various Township committees including the Planning Board, Recreation Advisory Council, Open Space Advisory Committee, Trails Advisory Committee, Agricultural Advisory Committee and Historic Preservation Commission. These groups reviewed the draft scope during their open public meetings and offered various

suggested changes which were incorporated into the Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by the Township.

- **Stakeholder Meetings** - The consultant team met with several organizations and staff members included the following:

Athletic Organizations & Interests

- Adult Softball Group
- Hershey Track and Field
- Franklin Little League
- Somerset South Boundbrook Little League
- Franklin Township Soccer
- Franklin Township Pop Warner
- FTWC (Franklin Township Wrestling Club)

Township Boards and Commissions

- Land Use and Open Space Committee
- Planning Board
- Recreation Advisory Committee
- Trails Advisory Committee
- Environmental Commission
- Agriculture Committee
- Open Space Advisory Committee
- Historic Preservation Advisory Committee

Community Organizations

- School Board Members
- Kingston Village Advisory Committee
- Chamber of Commerce at the Marconi Foundation
- Meadows Foundation
- Redevelopment Agency
- Hamilton Street Business District

User Group Interviews

- Senior Citizens Group
- Special Needs
- Parents of Children with Disabilities
- Therapeutic Recreation

Elected Official Interviews

- Council Persons

Staff Interviews

- Senior Citizen Coordinator
- Superintendent of Recreation
- Parks and Recreation Foreman from the Public Works

- Summaries of these meetings are provided in Appendix C.

- **Public Meeting #1** - An initial public workshop was held on April 14, 2011 at the Senior/Community Center at the beginning of the planning process. The public workshop involved a facilitated discussion intended to help establish priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services, and the preservation of open space, farmland and historic resources within the community and to help guide the priorities for the use of the Township's "Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund". A complete summary of the public workshop is included in Appendix C.

- **Mail/ Phone Survey** - Community Attitude and Interest Survey - Franklin Township conducted a Community Attitude and Interest Survey during the spring of 2011. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Franklin Township. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone. Leisure Vision Inc. worked with the Steering Committee, as well as members of the consultant team in the development of the survey questionnaire. A draft of the survey questionnaire was also sent to the Township Planning Board and Open Space Advisory Committee which offered various suggested changes which were incorporated into the final survey. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system. Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a random sample of 3,000 households in Franklin Township. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey, also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys

were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone. The goal was to obtain a total of at least 600 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 604 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 604 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 4.0%. Therefore, the statistically valid survey with 95% level of confidence is highly representative of the views of Franklin Township residents. The survey document is included in Appendix D.

- **Web Survey** - In addition to mail and mail/phone survey, the Consultants prepared a shorter web based survey using Survey Monkey. A total of 750 residents completed these forms. A summary of the web survey is included in Appendix E.
- **Public Meeting #2** - A second public meeting was held on September 19th 2011 in the Council Chambers. At the meeting, the Township's consultants presented the results of input received at the various workshops, meetings and surveys and facilitated a public discussion of these results.
- **Review of Draft Recommendations** by Open Space Advisory Committee and Planning Board - The consultant presented the preliminary recommendations of the Plan to the Open Space Advisory Committee and Planning Board at their respective public meetings in December 2011. The discussions of the preliminary recommendations resulted in several changes in preliminary recommendations in the Plan.
- **Joint Meeting of Steering Committee/ Open Space Advisory Committee/ Recreation Advisory Council** - The members of the Open Space Advisory Committee and Recreation Advisory Council were provided the draft of the "Preservation/Recreation Needs Assessment and Action Plan" and were invited to

attend a meeting with the Steering Committee on January 31, 2012 to voice comments, concerns, questions or suggestions they may have regarding the Plan. The comments received from members of the Open Space Advisory Committee and Recreation Advisory Council resulted in various revisions to the draft plan.

- **Public Meeting #3** - A third public meeting was held on March 6, 2012. At that meeting the Consultants presented the recommendations contained in the "Preservation/Recreation Needs Assessment and Action Plan" and facilitated a public discussion of the Plan.

## What Franklin Township Residents Told Us

Through the many opportunities for community input, the citizens' needs were determined. The following is a brief summary of the findings and needs as communicated in the various methods:

1. Colonial Park, D&R Canal State Park, Inman Park, Middlebush Park and schools, are the parks and recreational facilities that are visited by the most households in the random sample survey
2. 79% of persons responding to the mail/phone survey and 94% of those responding to the web survey visited a park at least once in the past year which is much higher than the national benchmark of 72%.
3. Approximately 87% of the households that use parks rated the existing facilities as "Excellent" or "Good".
4. Approximately 31% of respondent households in the mail survey and 75% in the web survey have participated in programs offered by the Township in the past year. (Higher than the national benchmark of 30%)

5. According to the random sample survey results, the facilities with the highest unmet demand include:

- Indoor swimming pools/water parks
- Outdoor swimming pools/aquatic centers
- Paved bike trails
- Recreation/Community Center
- Outdoor stage or amphitheater
- Walking and hiking trails
- Picnic areas and shelters
- Natural areas and nature parks
- Rental facilities for banquets and receptions
- Small Neighborhood Parks

6. Programs indicated in the random sample mail/phone survey with the highest unmet needs include:

- Adult wellness and fitness
- Nature programs
- Water fitness
- Adult Sports
- Adult art, dance performing arts
- Adult day trips
- Youth learn-to-swim programs
- Martial arts programs
- Special events
- Youth fitness and wellness
- Youth sports programs

7. The top functions that residents felt the Township should provide include:

- Operating and maintaining parks and facilities
- Providing programs for all residents
- Preserve the environment and provide open/green space
- Provide spaces for outdoor sports programs

8. There is a large shortage of active recreation facilities, especially athletic fields, throughout Franklin Township and gaps in the locations of parks and facilities.

9. There is a strong desire to maintain and upgrade the park and recreation system.

10. There is a strong demand indicated in all methods of public input for a recreation/community center and integrated trails throughout the community.

11. The addition of restrooms in the parks was by far the most indicated improvement to existing parks that residents desired.

12. Residents generally support the use of the Trust Fund for improving existing parks, new park development, and trail development as higher priorities compared to the historic uses of the Fund for open space acquisition, farm land preservation and historic preservation.

## **Future Vision of Parks and Recreation in Franklin Township**

### **Current Township Mission Statement**

The Township of Franklin shall, through the democratic process, evaluate the needs of the public and shall provide quality, cost effective services to the community.

### **Current Township Vision Statement**

Residents of the Township of Franklin will live and thrive in a community that values community pride and spirit, celebrates diversity and creates an environment that provides opportunities for all people so that they develop as healthy, caring, positive, educated and responsible members of the community.

### **Current Recreation Department Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Recreation, Community Celebrations & Park Administration is to improve the quality of life in the community by providing a wide range of services to meet the recreational needs of the public, and by providing and preserving open space and parkland for all to enjoy.

### **Vision for the Future**

The Steering Committee and Township leaders envision a parks and recreation system that accomplishes the following goals:



2. **Balance:**

- Provides an appropriate mix of active recreation, passive recreation, and natural environments that are equitably distributed throughout Franklin Township;
- Fosters an appreciation of nature and illustrates respect for the natural environment and promotes sustainable natural resource management practices;
- Preserves the past while planning for the future;

3. **Equal Access:** Provides facilities that are equitably distributed, accessible to persons of all abilities, and for persons with a variety of interests;

4. **Quality Experiences:**

- Provides parks and facilities that are safe, attractive, well used, and well maintained;
- Provides facilities and program that are unique and are attractive to both existing and potential residents;
- Offers unique and scenic park and recreation opportunities;
- Provides quality athletic fields for children and adults to participate in healthy sports programs. The fields are developed in complexes for efficient maintenance, management and supervision. The complexes serve the needs of local leagues and host tournaments to generate income;
- Provides an outdoor family aquatic center designed with the whole family in mind. Provides aquatic programs such as aerobics, learn-to-swim, life saving, etc.
- Partners with another organization to provide an indoor recreation and community center to supplement the programs offered at the Senior/Community Center. Provides opportunities for fitness, wellness,

education, and athletics. Ideally it would include indoor aquatics.

5. **Connectivity:**

- Is connected with a series of safe pathways and bikeways to provide access to neighborhoods, parks, schools and other destinations for transportation purposes and for recreation. Current and future modes of transportation are considered;

6. **Programming Opportunities:**

- Engages families and all citizens to participate in healthy indoor and outdoor activities;
- Provides a recreation/community center that offers facilities for fun, fitness, wellness, and a variety of programs for residents of all ages. The center is a community gathering place for families and residents of all ages;
- Includes parks and programs that are well publicized and recognized by the residents;

7. **Fosters Cooperation:**

- Includes a partnership of Franklin Township (including several boards and commissions), Franklin Township Schools, athletic organizations, neighborhoods, developers, volunteers, and various organizations to acquire, develop, operate and manage the parks, trails, and facilities;
- Complements the activities, facilities and programs offered by other organizations and businesses serving the community;
- Is supported by an active group of community leaders and volunteers that promotes implementation of the Plan over the long term.

8. **Improves Franklin Township:**

- Significantly adds to the unique identity of Franklin Township as an

outstanding place to live, work and play;

- Creates a unique identity for Franklin Township;
- Increases property values;
- Increases the aesthetic beauty and sense of pride in Franklin Township;

#### 9. **Fiscally Sound:**

- Is funded in an efficient and responsible manner while providing the level of service and maintenance necessary for a high quality system;
- Franklin Township utilizes every opportunity to leverage funding from outside sources such as grants, philanthropy, partnerships, and volunteerism;
- Provides events and programs that generate revenues to support the operations costs;
- Establishes policies or target guidelines for equitable distribution of the Trust Fund among the various potential uses based upon the findings of the Plan.

### **Action Plan**

The public opinion has clearly shifted since the creation of the Trust Fund. The Township, along with the County, State and Federal Governments have been successful in preserving 34% of the township land mass as open space. The Open Space Committee is shifting their recommendations from outright acquisition to purchase of development rights for farm land preservation. The Plan recommends the following expenditures of funds from the Trust Fund in the time frames listed below for consideration by Township Council.

#### 1. **Short Term – Immediate needs (0-2 years)**

- Increased maintenance staff for existing parks

- Short term improvements to existing parks as outlined in the Qualitative Park Inventory
- Two open space acquisitions of targeted open space land
- Historic preservation immediate needs to prevent further deterioration of properties.
- Continue Farm Land Preservation Plan
- Higher percentage dedicated for new park facilities development
- Develop the high priority new park improvements by:
  - Completing the next phase of Middlebush Park to serve the north half of the Township
  - Develop the Franklin Park Natural Area (Catalpa) in the South.
  - Develop small parks on current Township owned park land in Wards 4 and 5 at Willow Road, Arlington Park, Norris Road Park, and Hawthorne Park
  - Developer to complete Summerfield Park
  - Planning for the North-South Connector Trail
- Reach out to potential partners (such as the YMCA) for the development of an indoor recreation and fitness center with an indoor pool. Continue this action item through other time frames until a partner is found.
- Acquire land or easements for the Marconi Site Canal Bridge Access with historic markers.
- Dunn-Gunther Park – Start the diversion application process if this site is to be developed for active recreation.

### 3. Mid-Short Term (3-5 years)

- Complete high priority, and start medium priority improvements to existing parks
- Continue increased maintenance staff
- New Park Development
  - Complete Middlebush Park
  - New facilities development at one or two sites in the central part of the Township requiring approximately 110 to 120 total acres of developed area. Ideally the park site(s) would also include an equal amount of passive/natural area to provide a balance and provide opportunities for nature education.
    - Outdoor Family Aquatic Center
    - Amphitheater
    - Large all-access playground
    - Four-field baseball-softball complex
    - Three picnic shelters for 50-75 people each
    - Six soccer/rectangular multi-purpose fields
  - Community Center Gymnasium and Fitness Addition
- Upgrade the Middle School Athletic Field complex in cooperation with the School Board.
- Increase maintenance staff to coincide with the new park development.
- Complete higher priority historic preservation improvements
- Continue Farm Land Preservation Plan

### 4. Medium Term (6-10 years)

- Complete lower priority improvements to existing parks

- Continue increased maintenance staff
- New Park and Facility Development
  - Purchase additional land and develop small parks in Wards 4 and 5
  - Develop a Community Park with athletic complex in the south-central part of the Township. The park should include:
    - Approximately 65 to 75 acres of developed area.
    - Four-field youth baseball and softball complex with one field large enough for adult and senior softball.
    - 4-7 soccer/rectangular multi-purpose fields.
    - Large baseball field for adults and 16 year old and over players.
    - Playground
    - Picnic shelters
    - Basketball Courts
    - Walking trails
    - Other support facilities.
  - Develop the Hamilton Street Business District Park
  - Form a partnership for the development of the Fitness and Recreation Center if not yet established.
- Continue farm land preservation process of targeted farms
- Continue progress on historic preservation priorities
- Completion of the North-South Connector Bike Trail

### 5. Long Term (11-20 years)

- Acquisition of land and development of a future Community Park in growth areas of the Township
- Complete additional small parks in Wards 4 and 5

- Develop an indoor swimming facility if a partnership is not formed for the Fitness and Recreation Center with an indoor swimming pool.
- Complete farm land purchase of development rights
- Complete lower priority improvements for historic preservation

### Where to Get More Information

The Preservation and Recreation Needs Assessment and Action Plan includes a great deal of additional detail including the following topics:

- Population and land use trends
- Summaries of previous studies
- Existing budget
- Inventory and assessment of existing parks and facilities

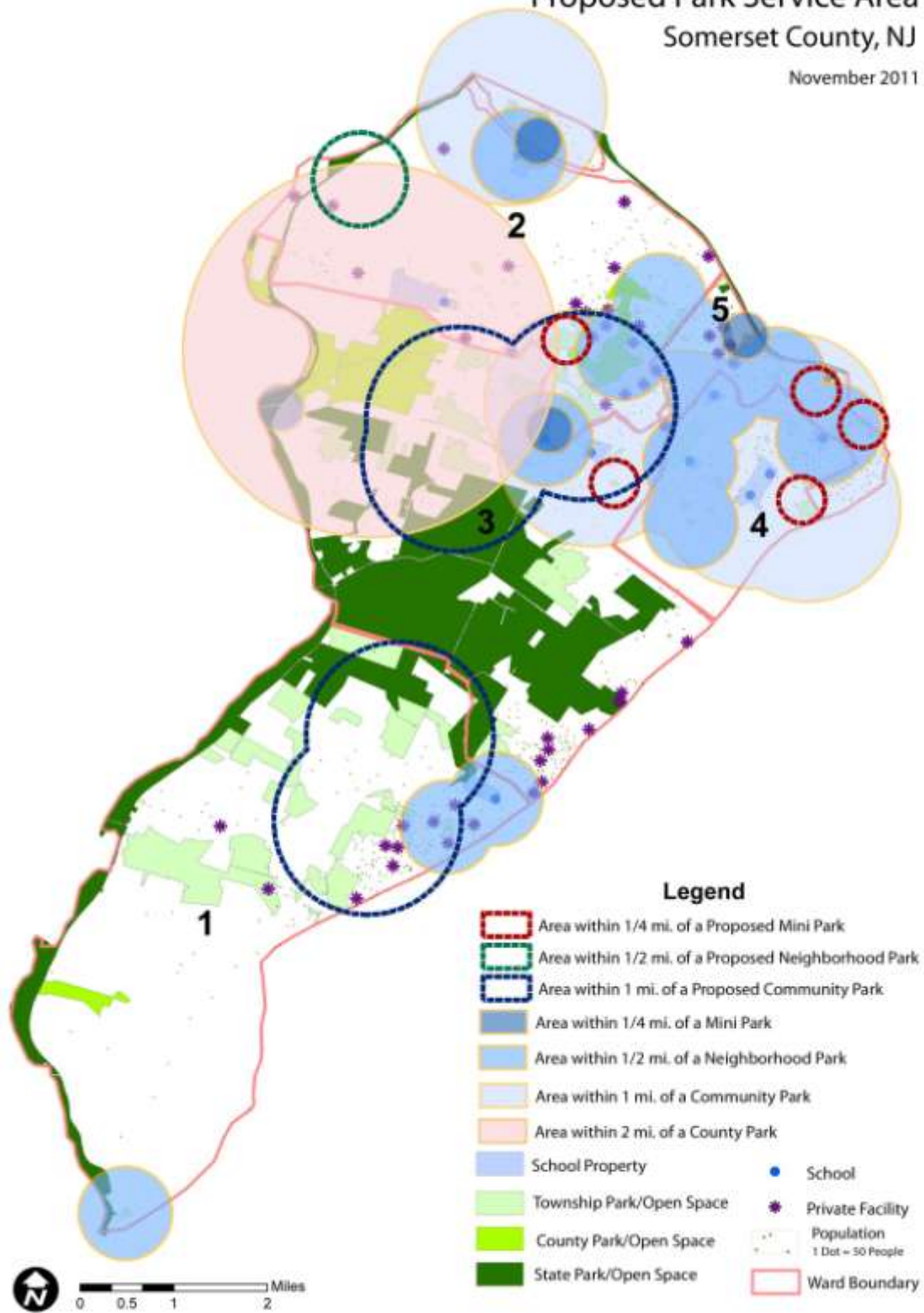
- Summary of public workshops and stakeholder group discussions
- Discussion of survey results
- Parks, recreation facilities, and open space needs
- Individual park recommendations and budgets
- Priorities for the proposed improvements
- Recommendations for the use of the Trust Fund over a 20 year period
- Implementation strategies in a time-line

This information is intended to provide the direction needed by the Township Council in key decisions pertaining to park and recreation facility development and use of the Trust Fund. The final Plan is available for viewing at the Franklin Township Planning Department.

# Franklin Township Proposed Park Service Area

Somerset County, NJ

November 2011



RBA Brandstetter Carroll Inc.

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**I. Introduction**

**A. Project Background**

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To date, the Fund has been primarily used for open space acquisition, farm land preservation, and on a limited basis for historic preservation. Recently, the Township Council has approved expenditures from the Trust Fund for recreation development of Middlebush Park and the Little League Complex. This change in the use of the funds has sparked debate on the future of the Trust Fund among proponents for use of the fund for the various allowed uses. For example, the development of Middlebush Park has been discussed for twelve years. These discussions pertaining to the use of the funds caused Council to need two informational pieces to be used in their decision making process. First is a Recreation Needs Assessment that would be accomplished in a statistically valid and comprehensive manner to identify the true recreation needs of the Township. The second item is an evaluation of the amount of funds needed for the various competing uses of the Trust Fund.

**B. The Need for a Recreation Needs Assessment**

The population of Franklin Township has increased considerably over the last two decades from 42,780 residents in 1990 to 50,903 in 2000 to 62,300 in 2010. Although the amount of Township-owned open space has increased, the amount of park and recreation space has increased minimally. In addition, the athletic leagues participation numbers are increasing but the amount of fields available for games and practices have not increased. This results in the overuse of existing fields leading to unacceptable field conditions.

The Township has taken stock in its open space and recreation needs by preparing the: Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2000, Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan in 2007, Canal Access Vision and Strategic Plan in

2009, 2006 Township Master Plan, Pathways and Trails Plan in 2008, Southern Park Survey Report in 2009, other studies, and a review of benchmarking of New Jersey communities prepared for Middletown Township by Brandstetter Carroll Inc. in 2008. This benchmarking indicated that Franklin Township budgeted much less per capita than the average of other communities, provided considerably less acres of developed park land, and provided less fields for the population. Summaries of previous documents are included in Appendix A.

Another factor to consider is the distribution of the Township's population. While much of the land area is rural, pockets in the northeast (Wards 4 and 5) and in the Franklin Park area are very dense. The distribution of recreation facilities needs to be evaluated to identify those gaps in where facilities are located.

All of these factors and the desire to improve the quality of life for present and future residents of Franklin Township caused the Township Council to realize the need for a comprehensive process to identify the true needs of the community so that Franklin Township can be in a position to meet those needs in the future.

### **C. Planning Process**

1. The planning process for the Franklin Township Needs Assessment included the following components.
  - a. A review of the previous studies that pertain to the delivery of parks, recreation facilities, open space, and services in Franklin Township.
  - b. A review of the population and land use trends for Franklin Township.
  - c. Preparation of a parks and recreation facilities and programs inventory, including a discussion of facilities by park type and a discussion of parks, recreation facilities, and open space provided by the County, Township, State, schools, not-for-profit organizations, and other providers.
  - d. The preparation of a Comprehensive Needs Analysis based on recreation facility level of service guidelines, public workshops, surveys of the general public (both a web based survey available to all residents and a statistically valid mail/phone survey of a random sample of households), and meetings with stakeholders and special interest groups.
  - e. Benchmarking to other parks and recreation agencies throughout New Jersey to develop comparisons to their budgets, programs, land, athletic fields, recreation facilities, and staffing.
  - f. Review and oversight by a Steering Committee with representatives of the community and officials from the Township.

- g. Recommendations for improvements to existing parks.
- h. Recommendations for land and new parks.
- i. Preparation of conceptual plans for selected sites based on recommendations.
- j. Identification of the fiscal needs of the various potential uses of the Trust Fund. A Historic Preservation Resources Needs Assessment is being prepared as a separate study.
- k. An Action Plan identifying the recommendations and proposed uses of the Trust Fund over a twenty year period.

**D. Why are Parks and Recreation Important?**

Here are some reasons why this Needs Assessment, additional planning, and the future of parks and recreation in Franklin Township are very important:

The local government, County, State, and non-profit organizations in the Franklin Township area manage nearly 7,400 acres of land designated for parks, recreation, and open space purposes. The Franklin Township Schools operate approximately 345 additional acres of playgrounds and recreational field areas. These agencies have the responsibility to manage this land in an efficient manner that is consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

For many residents, parks provide their only access to the natural environment. For all residents they provide natural and active outdoor recreational opportunities.

The quality of a community's parks and recreation system is viewed as one of the indicators of the overall quality of life. A quality park and recreation system is essential to attracting businesses to locate in the Township

Obesity has become an ever growing problem in the township, county, state and country. Parks and recreation facilities and activities are needed to provide opportunities for citizens to become more active.

Property values around parks tend to be considerably higher than other areas, thereby making an annual contribution to the community in the form of higher property tax revenues, as well as additional profits to the owners at point of sale. More valuable properties also tend to be maintained at a higher level, improving the appearance of the communities.

A recent study titled "The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation" by John L. Crompton for the Trust for Public Land included a section on the impact of parks and open space on property taxes. This study indicates that property values are higher for properties near quality parks and open spaces than for similar properties located elsewhere. Approximately 20 studies have investigated this issue in the last few decades which overwhelmingly verified the legitimacy of the

“Proximate Principle” of increased land values near parks. In addition, recent surveys of home buyers by the National Association of Home Builders indicate that trails, parks, and playgrounds are three of the top five amenities that a home buyer desires when considering a new home purchase.

The residents and leadership of Franklin Township place a high value on the quality of life that can result from an outstanding park and recreation system. As you will see in the Needs Analysis section, the public uses parks and programs in surrounding communities at a high rate and desire these services in the Franklin Township community. The parks can become the gathering place for the community and help to provide a positive community identity.

**II. Planning Context**

**A. Population Trends**

Population History and Projections

An overall understanding of the population trends of Franklin Township is necessary to identify the present and predicted future needs for parks and recreation services and facilities. Table 1 illustrates the population trends for the Township from 1990-2035. These tables use US Census Bureau data and projections from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. An addition of 5,000 people were added to the North Jersey Transportation Planning projections since the actual population in 2010 exceeded projections by 5,000.

**Table 1: Franklin Township, New Jersey Population History and Projections (1990-2050)**

	Census			Projections				
	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Franklin Township	42,780	50,903	62,300	67,760	71,625	75,473	76,087	77,400

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2035- North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority +5,000.

Table 2 summarizes the population breakdown of the census tracts in Franklin Township, and indicates that tract 53402 has had the largest growth in population since the year 2000 (63.90%), followed by tract 543 (48.70%). Tract 53404 has the largest area in square miles (13.6); however has one of the smaller population densities at 774. The census tracts and wards are shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 illustrates the density of the Township.

**Table 2: Census Tract Population Distribution**

Census Tract	Population 2010	Growth since 2000	Square Miles	Population Density
53501	3,001	71.00%	7.5	400
543	9,181	48.70%	5.5	1,669
53105	6,814	0.50%	2.1	3,245
53102	3,658	5.30%	0.68	5,379
53103	4,901	-1.90%	1.6	3,063
532	7,427	4.50%	1.2	6,189
533	4,703	21.40%	0.91	5,168
53404	10,529	36.50%	13.6	774
53403	4,699	1.70%	0.82	5,730
53402	7,387	63.90%	13	568

Figure 1: Census Tracts and Wards

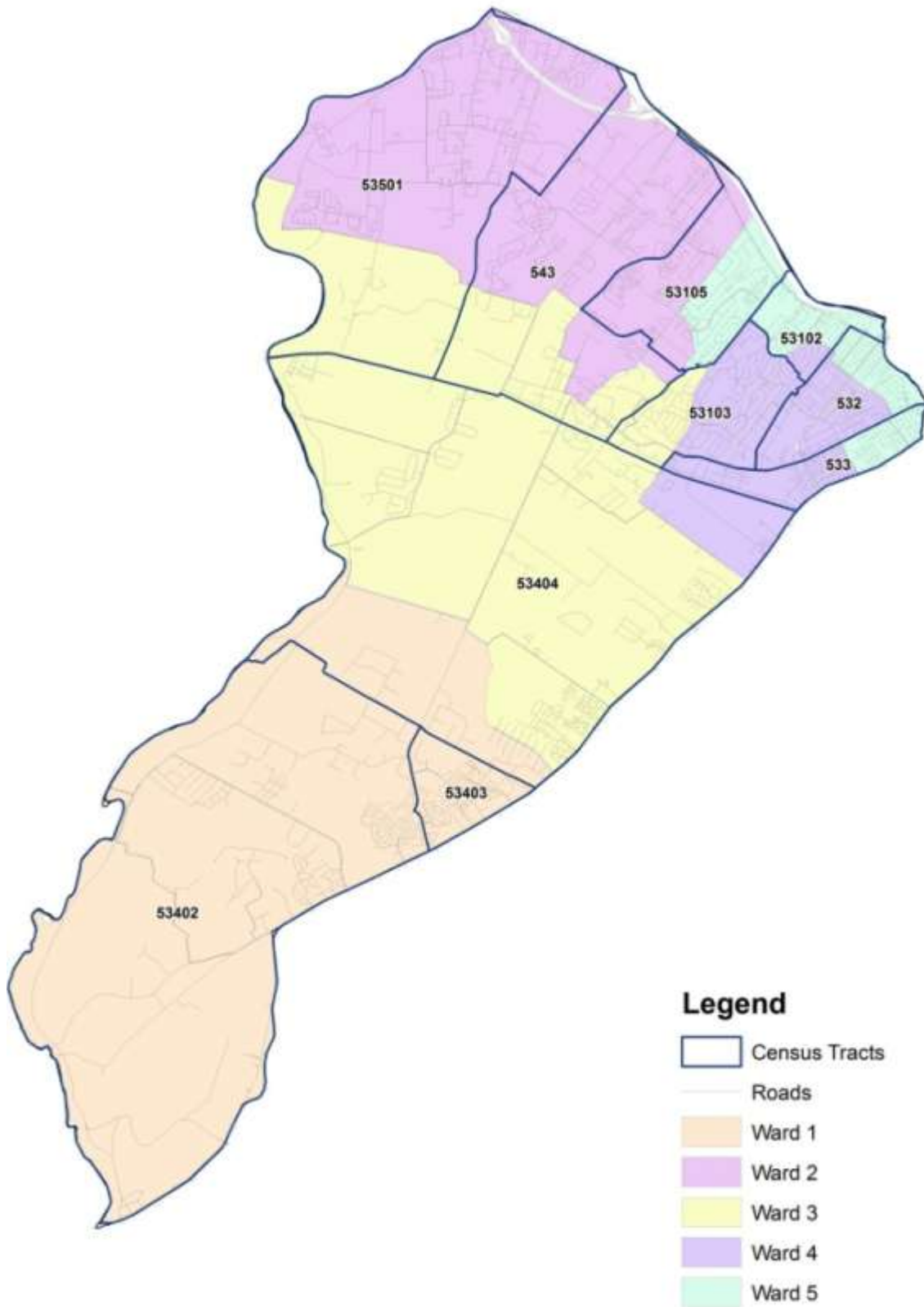


Figure 2: Population Density

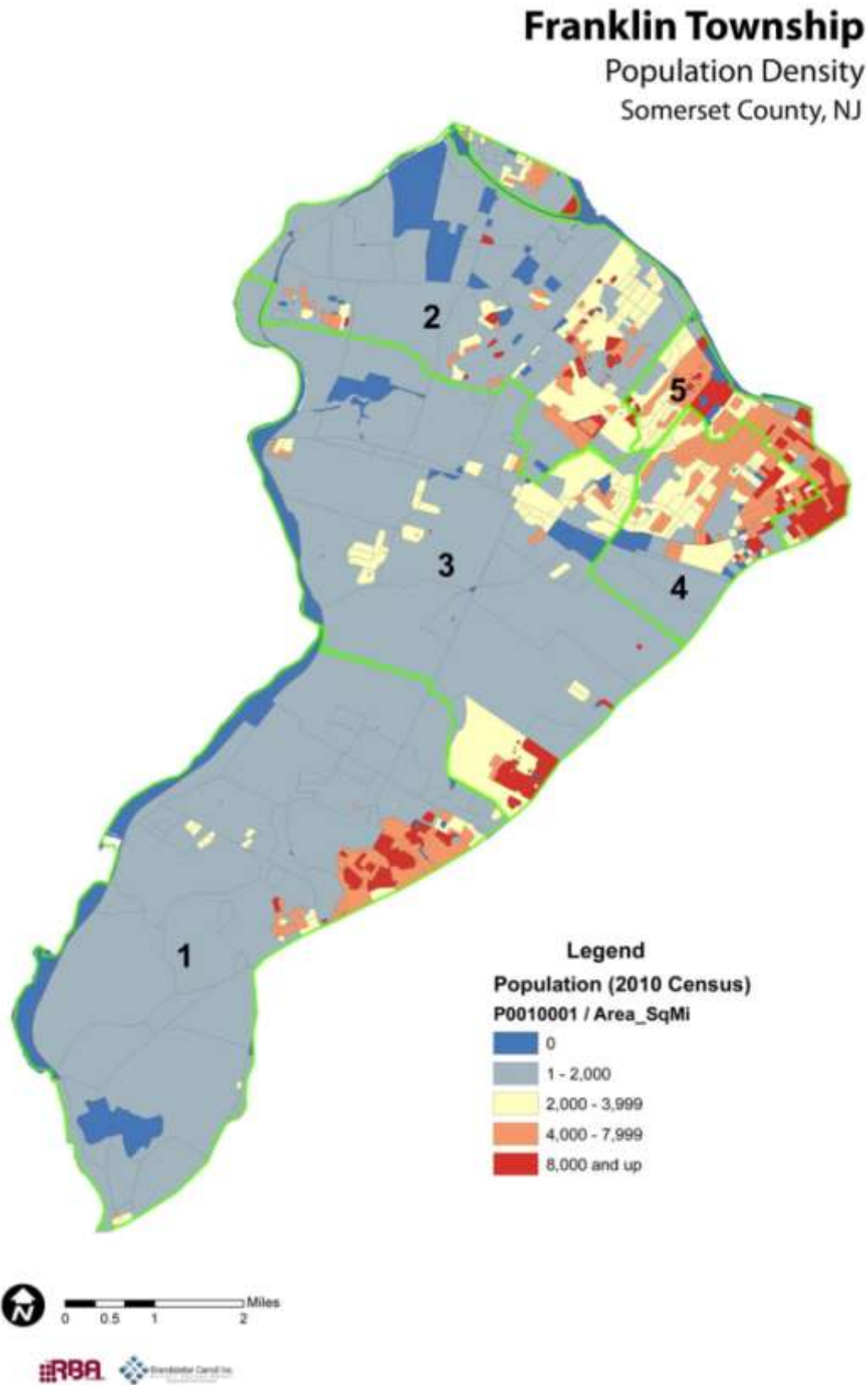




Table 3 demonstrates the developed park land by ward population. Ward 5 is the most densely populated ward at 5,934 people per square mile, and is the second highest population per developed park acre at 482. Ward 1 is the lowest population density with the highest population per developed park acre at 669, but also has lots of undeveloped open space land. Ward 3 is the best served with the lowest population per developed park land and second lowest density. Ward 2 is also well served with the density lower than that of the Township and the second lowest population per developed park acre at 59. Ward 4 has a total of 88 persons per developed acre. It should also be noted that Wards 2, 3 and 4 have many private sites in the most densely populated portions of the wards.

**Table 3: Developed Park Land by Ward Population Analysis**

	Ward					
	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Approximate Population per Ward	12,961	13,462	13,289	11,154	11,466	62,332
Total Developed Park Acres	19.38	227.95	544.51	126.6	23.8	942
Persons per Developed Park Acre	<b>669</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>66</b>

Table 4 indicates the racial and ethnic concentrations within each tract from the U.S. Census Bureau. Tract 53501 had the largest percentage of White population, while tract 533 had the lowest. The Black and Hispanic population in tracts 532 and 533 comprised over 75% of the population. The largest Asian concentrations resided in tracts 53403 and 53402. Highlights from the New Jersey State Data Center include: Franklin Township had the fourth highest numeric increase in black population from 2000 to 2010 with growth of 3,316; Franklin Township ranked eighth in the highest percent of Asian population with 20%; and Somerset County had the third highest numeric gain of Asian Indian population with an addition of 11,228 from 2000 to 2010. Figure 2, Population Density, illustrates the greatest population density is occurring in Ward 5 in the northeast corner of the Township, and also the northeast corner of Ward 1, mainly within Tract 53403. There is very little to no population density on the western side of the Township.

**Table 4: Census Tract Racial and Ethnic Concentrations**

Census Tract	White		Black		Hispanic		Asians		Native Americans		Multicultural		Other	
	Percent of Population	Percent Change since 2000	Percent of Population	Percent Change since 2000	Percent of Population	Percent Change since 2000	Percent of Population	Percent Change since 2000	Percent of Population	Percent Change since 2000	Percent of Population	Percent Change since 2000	Percent of Population	Percent Change since 2000
53501	76%	59%	8%	98%	6%	78%	9%	303%	0%	100%	1%	86%	0%	-30%
543	63%	27%	12%	76%	5%	88%	18%	161%	0%	400%	1%	34%	0%	67%
53105	48%	-19%	19%	27%	7%	24%	23%	31%	0%	33%	3%	79%	0%	50%
53102	32%	-24%	33%	29%	9%	42%	22%	24%	0%	80%	3%	31%	0%	-12%
53103	42%	-24%	33%	7%	11%	128%	9%	36%	0%	-40%	2%	38%	0%	41%
532	15%	-35%	45%	-9%	33%	90%	4%	80%	0%	53%	2%	-4%	1%	-46%
533	13%	-40%	37%	-5%	40%	138%	7%	113%	0%	300%	2%	49%	1%	60%
53404	32%	-18%	30%	98%	8%	136%	27%	96%	0%	70%	3%	108%	0%	-28%
53403	33%	-31%	24%	20%	8%	28%	32%	44%	0%	100%	2%	46%	0%	0%
53402	41%	4%	13%	79%	7%	130%	36%	231%	0%	38%	3%	205%	0%	425%

Table 5 depicts the household and family size from 1990-2015 and indicates that in Franklin Township, the average household size decreased from 1990-2000, but has since increased and is expected to grow through 2015. The household and family size for residents in Franklin Township is lower than that of Somerset County and the State of New Jersey as a whole. The 2010 average household size of Franklin Township is 2.64 as compared to 2.68 for the State of New Jersey and 2.59 for the U.S.

**Table 5: Household and Family Size (1990 to 2015)**

	Housing Units	Average Household Size		Average Family Size		Average Household Size	
		1990	2000	1990	2000	2010	2015
USA	115,904,641	2.63	2.59	3.16	3.14	2.59	2.60
New Jersey	3,064,645	2.70	2.68	3.21	3.21	2.68	2.68
Somerset County	108,984	2.67	2.69	3.11	3.19	2.75	2.76
Franklin Township	19,355	2.60	2.58	3.07	3.14	2.64	2.65
Source: U.S. Census and ESRI Bis Forecast							

Table 6, Median Age, identifies trends throughout Franklin Township and Somerset County, New Jersey, and the USA of the median age becoming higher. The median age in Franklin Township was 33.2 in 1990 and is expected to increase to 39.3 in 2015. It should be noted that the median age for Somerset County is slightly higher than that of the State of New Jersey, and significantly higher than the United States. The median age in 2010 was 39.2 in Franklin Township as opposed to 40.0 for Somerset County, 38.9 for New Jersey, and 37.0 for the USA. The age of residents is important because Franklin Township needs to plan for the appropriate age groups that it will be serving.

**Table 6: Median Age (1990-2015)**

	1990	2000	2010	2015
USA	32.9	35.3	37.0	37.3
New Jersey	34.5	36.7	38.9	39.1
Somerset County	34.8	37.2	40.0	40.3
Franklin Township	33.2	36.2	39.2	39.3
Source: U.S. Census and ESRI Bis Forecast				

Table 7 indicates the population age 65 and over from 1990 to 2015 and indicates that this age group increased in percentage from 1990 to 2000 (10.2% to 11.4%) and from 2000-2015 (11.4% to 12.4%) of the population in Franklin Township. The population of 65 and older is expected to increase to 13.7% by the year 2015. Somerset County was just slightly below that of Franklin Township in 2010 (12%), while the population of the State (13.8%) and U.S. (13.1%) is higher.

**Table 7: Population Age 65 and over (1990-2015)**

	1990		2000		2010		2015	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
USA	31,241,831	12.6%	34,991,753	12.4%	40,471,364	13.1%	46,658,714	14.4%
New Jersey	1,032,025	13.4%	1,113,136	13.2%	1,224,800	13.9%	1,370,984	15.4
Somerset County	26,013	10.8%	33,381	11.2%	39,831	12%	46,672	13.3%
Franklin Township	4,347	10.2%	5,805	11.4%	7,761	12.4%	9,248	13.7%

Source: U.S. Census and ESRI Bis Forecast

Table 8 identifies the population age 19 and under from 1990 to 2015. The table indicates that in Franklin Township there was a large increase in this percentage from 1990 to 2000 from 22.6% to 24.2%. The increase continued and reached 25.1% in 2010 and is projected to reach 25.7% by the year 2015. It should be noted that the percentage of the population 19 and under in Franklin Township was significantly lower than that of the State of New Jersey and the U.S. in 1990, however, by the year 2015, is projected to be close in terms of population percentage.

All of this information indicates that the population of Franklin Township is younger than the State and the U.S. The Township has a smaller household size than the State of New Jersey, but larger household size than the average U.S. home in terms of their percentages.

**Table 8: Population 19 and Under (1990-2015)**

	1990		2000		2010		2015	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
USA	71,321,886	28.7%	80,473,265	28.6%	84,382,980	27.1%	86,153,914	26.6%
New Jersey	2,012,052	26%	2,284,107	27.1%	2,338,935	26.6%	2,302,311	25.8
Somerset County	57,990	24.1%	80,959	27.3%	95,310	28.6%	96,838	27.9%
Franklin Township	9,703	22.6%	12,363	24.2%	16,292	25.1%	17,331	25.7%

Source: U.S. Census and ESRI Bis Forecast

### **B. Land Use Trends**

Land use trends are of significant importance to the Needs Assessment process due to the fact that residents desire parks close to their homes. Identifying the existing and proposed residential areas has become extremely important in the proper planning of parks and recreation facilities.

Franklin Township contains approximately 46.1 square miles. Of that total, approximately 34% has some form of protection from development in the form of State or County ownership and protection, designation as Township open space, or the development rights have been purchased as part of the Farmland Preservation program.

The primary growth areas of the Township over the previous decade have been in the northwest portion of the Township, within the Renaissance Redevelopment area in the northeast portion of the Township, and in the Franklin Park area. The northwest portion of the Township has seen several large developments including Somerset Run, Sterling Point, Renaissance, Canal Walk, and Cedar Manor. Several of these neighborhoods are limited to seniors and provide some level of recreation facilities and activities for their residents. This area is expected to see additional residential development with the Summerfields and Somerset Grand developments currently under construction.

The Renaissance Redevelopment area in the northeast portion of the Township has experienced substantial residential development in the last few years. This is expected to continue in the future.

### **C. Existing Programs**

Due to the lack of a recreation center, indoor programs are limited to spaces that do not need large, high ceiling activities, except those that can be held in the schools. Currently the Community/Senior Center and the schools are the primary locations.

Franklin Township offers an extensive program for several senior groups that totals over six hundred members. These include dancing, singing, meals, trips, playing cards, guest speakers etc. Additional programs offered include a therapeutic basketball league, teen drop in center, softball clinics, summer day camps, preschool athletic programs, basketball leagues (youth and adult), all held in Franklin Township schools. Some programs, such as aerobics, Youth Council, Zumba, therapeutic programs, toddler adventures, and dancing, are held at the Senior Center.

The various sports leagues organize most of the youth sports programs such as soccer, baseball, softball, football, and cricket and they use Township or County Park sites. Youth basketball is organized through the Department of Recreation.

**D. Budget Overview**

The combined budgets for parks and recreation from the Township Department of Recreation, Community Celebrations and Park Administration and Public Works Departments are approximately \$1,249,321. Breakdown is as follows:

Parks and Recreation salaries and wages	\$371,961
Parks and Recreation expenses	\$52,360
Public Works salary and wages	\$400,000
Public Works expenses and supplies	\$50,000
User fees	\$300,000
Grants	\$75,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,249,321</b>

A benchmarking survey of other New Jersey communities was conducted with the results included in Appendix F.

The Franklin budget equates to approximately \$20 per person in the Township. The average expenditure per person of the 19 surveyed communities in New Jersey was \$43 with a median of \$40. Therefore, Franklin spends less per person on parks and recreation than most of the communities that were surveyed in New Jersey.

The percentage of the budget from user fees was considerably lower for Franklin than the other communities surveyed.

**III. Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory**

**A. Parks and Recreation Classification System**

The purpose of developing a park and recreation classification system for a community is to evaluate the total recreation opportunities that are being made available to the public. Too often, a community will “meet the standard” in terms of acreage, but it may meet this provision through only a single park that does not provide for the entire community. Therefore, a system of parks should be developed that provides a combination of local space such as mini-parks, neighborhood parks and community parks with county-wide space such as linear parks, county parks and support by regional or state parks.

The parks and recreation facilities inventory in this section identifies each park by its park type category and also lists the number of specific facilities that are located within each park. Table 9 defines each park by its typical size and service area of each category, population served by each park, typical features and facilities, and the desirable characteristics of each park in these categories. The categories and descriptions were adapted from the Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines that was published by the National Recreation and Park Association in 1987 and 1995.

A park system is generally reviewed and analyzed as a composite of recreation areas, each existing to meet a particular need. Based on a review of national and regional standards, a parks and recreation area classification system has been developed to reflect the actual conditions and opportunities for Franklin Township.

**Table 9: Parks and Recreation Area Classification System**

PARK TYPE	TYPICAL SIZE and SERVICE AREA	ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/ FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
LOCAL SPACE:				
1. Mini-Park (MP)	+/- 1 Acre 1/8 – 1/2 Mile Service Radius	0.5 Acre/1,000	Typical facilities may include playgrounds, small multi-use court area, and benches.	Most often provided in association with school facilities.  May also provide open space as needed to serve high density neighborhoods where children do not have adequate yard space.
2. Neighborhood Park (NP)	5-15 Acres  1/2-1.0 mile service radius. To serve a population up to 5,000	2.0 Acres/1,000	Suited for intense development.  Typical facilities include field games, court games, playground apparatus, small pools, small neighborhood centers, drinking	Easily accessible to neighborhood population (safe walking and bike distance)  May be developed as park/school facility or in conjunction with service agency facility.

## Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

PARK TYPE	TYPICAL SIZE and SERVICE AREA	ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
			fountains, and restrooms.	May not be needed in areas served by "community", "county" or "regional" parks.
3. Community Parks (CmP)	25-50+ Acres  1.0-2.0 mile service radius  To serve several neighborhoods with populations up to 20,000+.	2.5 Acres/1,000	Typical facilities include all those listed for Neighborhood Parks plus; major swimming pool, field or court game complex, major recreation or community center, etc.  May be an area of natural quality for picnicking, walking, etc.	Capable of providing a range of intensive recreational activities; or, provides one or two activities that attract users from multi-neighborhood areas.  Park should ideally be located at or near a school.  May meet needs of neighborhood park for users within a 1-mile radius.
4. Linear Park (LP)	N/A	N/A	Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel (pleasure driving, hiking, walking, jogging, biking, etc.). May also include active play areas, fitness courses, picnic areas, etc.	Built or natural corridors, such as utility rights-of-way, bluff lines, creek beds, and roads that link other components of the park system or other community facilities (schools, libraries, etc.) with park areas.
5. Special Use-Local (SUL)	Serves community-wide area.	N/A	Area for specialized or single purpose recreational activities, such as golf courses, plazas in commercial areas, major pools, riverfront park areas, indoor facilities, etc.	Area should be located to meet the special needs of the intended use.
<b>B. COUNTY/REGIONAL SPACE</b>				
6. County Parks (COP)	100 + Acres  5-6 mile service radius  To serve most of the County.	5.0 Acres/1,000	Large properties that contain some active recreation facilities and a large percentage of natural or geographical features.  Target size of 100 or more acres with 50% developed for active recreation.  Located in rural areas but readily accessible to most of the county	Capable of providing a range of specific recreational facilities.  Should include unique natural areas of ecological interest.  May meet needs of neighborhood and/or community park for users within a 2-mile radius.

## Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

PARK TYPE	TYPICAL SIZE and SERVICE AREA	ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/ FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
			<p>population.</p> <p>Travel time within 20 minutes.</p> <p>Should be located off of major roads.</p> <p>Destination-oriented parks.</p> <p>Should connect to linear park system.</p>	
7. Nature Parks (NaP)	Size as needed to protect the resource.		<p>Majority of park to remain in its natural state.</p> <p>Facilities should focus on education by use of "nature activities." The facility should reinforce that philosophy by offering habitat enhancement, trails, nature centers, interpretive signage, parking and restrooms.</p> <p>The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions.</p>	<p>Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest.</p> <p>Typical size should be over 50 acres for management efficiency.</p>
<b>C. MULTI-COUNTY/REGIONAL SPACE</b>				
8. Multi-County or State Park (SP)	<p>500 + Acres</p> <p>30 + mile service radius</p> <p>To serve several counties or region of the state.</p>		<p>State or multi-county agency operated park with large size.</p> <p>Attracts visitors from multiple counties.</p> <p>Contains some active facilities but primarily offers large areas of natural environments.</p> <p>Main attractions could include a lodge, outstanding natural features, historical features, trail system or other unique characteristics.</p>	Includes unique natural, cultural or ecological features.



### **B. Overview of Parks and Recreation in Franklin Township, New Jersey**

The residents of Franklin Township, New Jersey are offered a wide variety of parks, recreation facilities, and programs. The community's needs are currently being met by community parks offered by the Township, County, school facilities, State Parks, and other facilities within the County. Table 10, 11, and 12 provide a summary of the parks and recreation areas and facilities within the Township and also indicates the park type category for each existing park. Figure 3, 4, and 5 illustrate the locations of the existing parks, open space and facilities.

Table 10 indicates that the Township owns 54 sites totaling 2,283.88 acres. Of this total, approximately 108.88 acres at 19 sites are "developed", meaning it is used for active or passive recreation. Table 10 also indicates the number of recreation facilities at each site.

Table 11 identifies the sites, facilities and acreage at County Park sites, School Board owned facilities, and at State owned or leased sites. The Somerset County Park Commission has 1,003 acres of park land within Franklin Township with 730 acres being developed. Of the 730 acres, 525 acres are golf courses. These parks include Colonial Park, Quail Brook Golf Course and Park, Spooky Brook Golf Course, and undeveloped land at the Speiden and Hoebel Farm sites.

The Franklin Township School Board owns 345 acres of which 42 acres are developed as active recreation that is available to the public or used for recreation leagues. These facilities are at ten sites. It should be noted that the inventory counts all facilities, but only the facilities that are available to the public or recreation leagues were counted in the Needs Analysis.

The State of New Jersey owns 4,114.4 acres at five sites of which 50 acres are used for active or passive recreation. The largest of these is the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site with 3,307 acres. The main developed facility is the D&R Canal Trail.

Table 12 identifies the privately owned recreation facilities in the Township with 137.78 acres total at 45 sites with 72 acres being developed. Most of these sites are small homeowner association or apartment sites with the main facilities including tennis courts, swimming pools, and playgrounds. Some privately owned recreation facilities include the Cedar Hill Swim Club, Jersey Knights Soccer Complex, Pillar of Fire/Nike Soccer Complex, Soccer Center, Protec Hockey Ponds indoor ice facility, and two private schools at Cedar Hill Prep and Rutgers Prep. Although these facilities are not available to the general public, they do meet some of the demand for facilities. The homeowner and apartment facilities provide close-to-home mini-park or neighborhood park facilities and the larger private athletic facilities provide fields for higher quality level athletic leagues.



Table 11: County Parks, School Board Facilities, and State Parks and Recreation Facilities within Franklin Township

**Somerset County Park & Recreation Facilities Located in Franklin Township**  
 Franklin Township Needs Assessment  
 Parks and Recreation Resources Inventory

Site ID	Facility Name	Ward	Park Type	Total Acres	Developed Acres	OUTDOOR FACILITIES															INDOOR FACILITIES					Classroom / Multi-Purpose Room	Other Facilities and Comments	
						Tennis Courts	Baseball/ Softball Fields	Play Fields	Par Fitness Course	Cricket Pitch	Dog Park	Bocce Courts	Playground	Paved Trails (Miles)	Unpaved Trails (Miles)	Mini Golf Course	18 Hole Golf Course	Canoe Launch	Picnic Area	Picnic Shelter	Scout Camp	Lake	Restrooms	Concession Buildings	Gym			Fitness Center
C-1	Colonial Park	3	County	333	200	8	1		1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1		1	1	2		1					1	Pier, paddle boats, rose garden, perennial gardens
C-2	Quail Brook Golf Course	2	Special Use	200	195								1	0.5								1						Includes clubhouse & maintenance facilities
C-3	Quail Brook (Park Portion)	2	Neighborhood Park	See C-2	5		1					1															Pier	
C-4	Spooky Brook Golf Course	3	Special Use	350	330																	1					Includes clubhouse & maintenance facilities	
C-5	Speiden & Hoebel Farms	1	Nature Park	120	120									3.5													Trail distance to be confirmed	
<b>Total</b>				<b>1003</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	

**School Board Owned Facilities**  
 Franklin Township Needs Assessment  
 Parks and Recreation Resources Inventory

Site ID	Facility Name	Ward	Park Type	Total Acres	Developed Acres <sup>1</sup>	OUTDOOR FACILITIES															INDOOR FACILITIES					Classroom / Multi-Purpose Room	Other Facilities and Comments				
						Tennis Courts	Baseball/ Softball Fields	Play Fields	Track & Field	Football Fields	Field Hockey	Soccer Fields - Regulation Size Equivalent	Basketball Courts	Playground	Paved Trails (Miles)	Unpaved Trails (Miles)	Skate Park	Roller Hockey Rink	Dog Park (Acres)	Picnic Area	Picnic Shelter	Outdoor Swimming Pool	Beach	Auditorium	Wrestling Room			Gym	Fitness Center		
S-1	Franklin High School	2	Private	115.6	1	6	3*		1*	1*		2*																	Gym divides into (3) full courts		
S-2	Franklin Middle School	4	Community	74.6	5	6	4*	1	1	1		2*																	Football practice field with lighting		
S-3	Sampson G. Smith School	3	Community	31.8	13.8							4	1	1															Gym includes stage		
S-4	Conerly Road School	4	Neighborhood	12.5	4.2			1				1	1																Multipurpose room includes stage		
S-5	Elizabeth Avenue School	2	Neighborhood	39.2	4.3			1				1	1																Multipurpose room includes stage		
S-6	Franklin Park School	1	Neighborhood	37	6.8			1				1	1																Multipurpose room includes stage, doubles as cafeteria		
S-7	Hillcrest School (combined with Middle School)	4	Community	see S-2				1				1	1																Multipurpose room includes stage		
S-8	MacAfee Road School	4	Neighborhood	11.5	3			1				1	1																Multipurpose room includes stage		
S-9	Pine Grove Manor School	4	Neighborhood	17.3	2.6			1					1																Outdoor classroom with seating, stage and sound-play structure, garden plots in rear lot		
S-10	Board of Education	2	Neighborhood	5.5	1.3			1																							
<b>Total</b>				<b>345</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7*</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

\* Facilities not accessible for Recreation use  
 1. = Area of facilities available for public use.

**State Owned or Leased Facilities**  
 Franklin Township Needs Assessment  
 Parks and Recreation Resources Inventory

Site ID	Facility Name	Ward	Park Type	Total Acres	Developed Acres	OUTDOOR FACILITIES															INDOOR FACILITIES					Classroom / Multi-Purpose Room	Other Facilities and Comments			
						Tennis Courts	Baseball/ Softball Fields	Play Fields	Volleyball Courts	Football Fields	Soccer Fields	Basketball Courts	Playground	Paved Trails (Miles)	Unpaved Trails (Miles)	Skate Park	Roller Hockey Rink	Dog Park (Acres)	Picnic Area	Picnic Shelter	Outdoor Swimming Pool	Beach	Restrooms	Concession Buildings	Gym			Fitness Center		
SP-1	Six Mile Run Reservoir Site	1/3	Nature Park	3307	0																									Trails for hiking, biking, horses
SP-2	Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park	1/2/3/5	Linear Park	300	50																									
SP-3	Hutcheson Memorial Forest	3	Nature Park	500	0																									Owned by Rutgers University, guided tours only
SP-4	Flemer Preserve	1	Nature Park	7.4	0																									
SP-5	Frieda Marden Preserve	5	Nature Park	See SP-2	See SP-2																									Trail access to canal
<b>Total</b>				<b>4114.4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	

Table 12: Private Park and Recreation Facilities within Franklin Township

Private Park & Recreation Facilities Located in Franklin Township Franklin Township Needs Assessment Parks and Recreation Resources Inventory														
Legend Name	Facility Name	Park Type	Acres	OUTDOOR FACILITIES								INDOOR FACILITIES		
				Tennis Courts	Playground	Pool	Soccer	Basketball	Shelter	Shuffle Board	Baseball/ Softball	Ice Rink	Soccer Field	Other Facilities and Comments
P-1	Beacon Hill at Somerset	Private	3.15	2	1	1								
P-2	Canal Walk HOA	Private	2.2	2										Also two bocce ball courts
P-3	Carriage Homes	Private	2	6	2									Picnic area
P-4	Carriage Run Twnhs & Aptmnt	Private	0.2			1								
P-5	Cedar Hill Prep School	Private	1		1									
P-6	Cedar Hill Swim Club	Private	8.2	6	1	2		1			1			Two tennis practice walls
P-7	Clusters/Patios	Private	0.5	2	1									
P-8	Colonial/Heritage	Private	1.3	2		1								
P-9	Consolata Missionaries	Private	7				2							Also a cricket pitch
P-10	Countryside/Somerset	Private	1.4	2	1	1		1						
P-11	Courtyard/Classic Homes	Private	1	3		1								
P-12	Easton North Aptmnts	Private	1	1	1	1								
P-13	Forrest Gate	Private	0.5	1	1									
P-14	Franklin Greens Aptmnt	Private	0.75	2		1								
P-15	Garden Homes	Private	1	2		1								
P-16	Green Hill Manor Aptmts	Private	0.3		1	1								
P-17	Jersey Knights Soccer	Private	16.1				4							
P-18	Kingsberry Acres	Private	1.33	2	1									
P-19	Lakewood Townhomes	Private	0.6		2									
P-20	Manor Homes	Private	0.3		1									
P-21	Pillar of Fire / Nike Soccer	Private	31.5		1		8							
P-22	Princeton Highland Estates	Private	4.8		1		1				1			
P-23	Protec Hockey Ponds	Private	2.9									3		
P-24	Quail Brook East	Private	0.3	2	1									
P-25	Quail Crest	Private	0.8	4	1			1						
P-26	Queens Square	Private	0.3	2										
P-27	Regency Townhomes	Private	0.65	2	1									
P-28	Renaissance at Somerset	Private	2	2	1	1				4				
P-29	Rutgers Prep Private School	Private	17.7	5			2				2			
P-30	Soccer Center	Private	4.8				1						2	Outdoor field synthetic turf
P-31	Society Hill I Condo Assn	Private	0.5	1		1								
P-32	Society Hill II Condo Assn	Private	0.5	2	1	1								
P-33	Society Hill III Condo Assn	Private	1.3	3	1	1								
P-34	Society Hill VI Condo Assn	Private	1.4	2	1	1								
P-35	Society Hill VII Condo Assn	Private	0.2					1			1			
P-36	Somerset Christian College	Private	3.7								2			
P-37	Somerset Glen Condo Assn	Private	4	2	2	1		1						
P-38	Somerset Mews Apartments	Private	1.4	2	1	1								
P-39	Somerset Run HOA	Private	3.3	2		1				2				
P-40	Sterling Pointe	Private	0.75			1								
P-41	Ten Mile Run HOA	Private	2.15	2	1	1								
P-42	Trendmaker North	Private	0.5	2	1									
P-43	Villas	Private	0.5	2										
P-44	Whitehall Apartment Complex	Private	0.2		1									
P-45	Whitehall Manor Condo Assn	Private	1.8	2	1	1								
<b>Total</b>			<b>137.78</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	

Figure 3: Park and Open Space Locations

# Franklin Township Park and Open Space Map Somerset County, NJ 11/30/2011

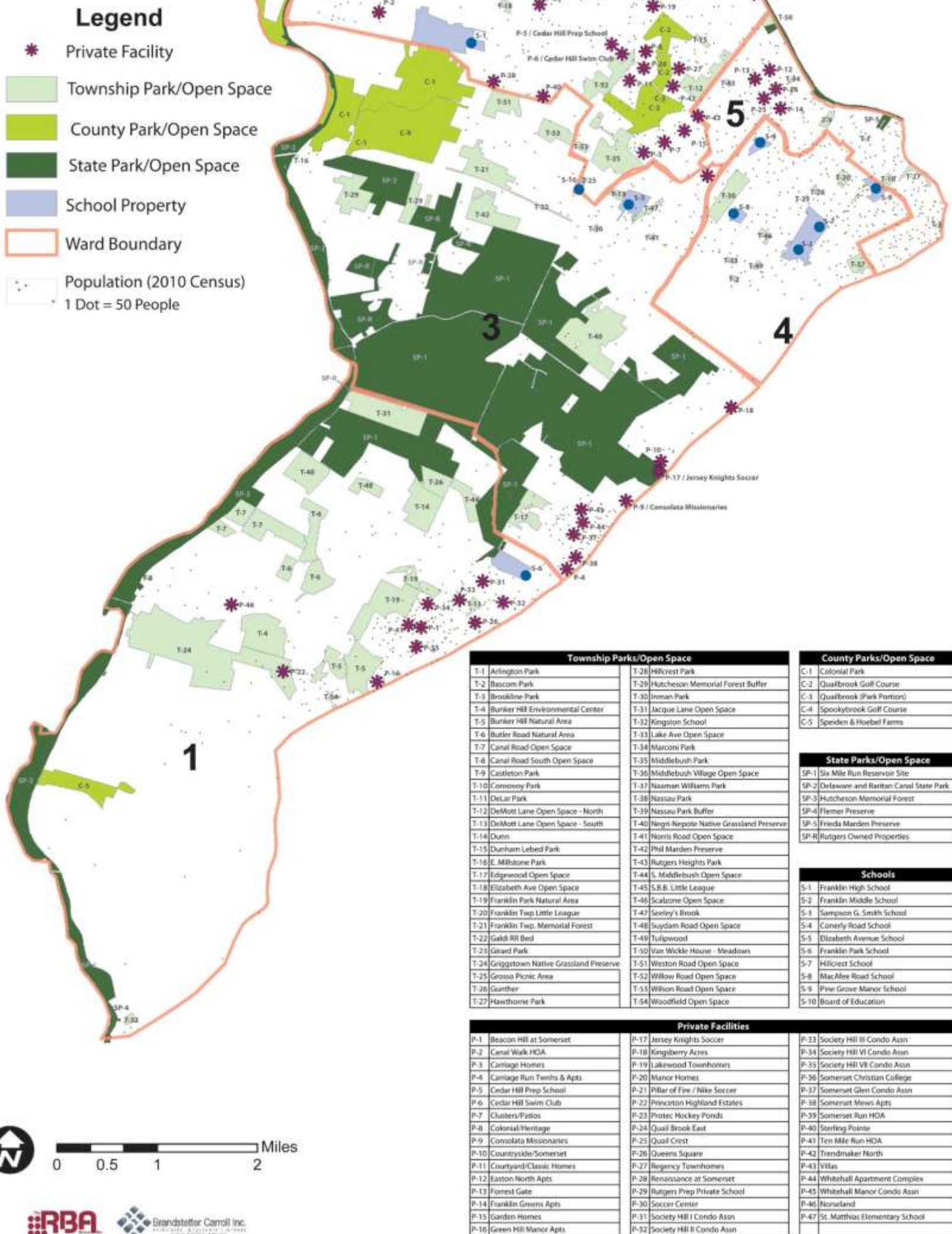


Figure 4: Public Facility Locations

# Franklin Township

## Public Facilities Map

Somerset County, NJ

11/30/2011

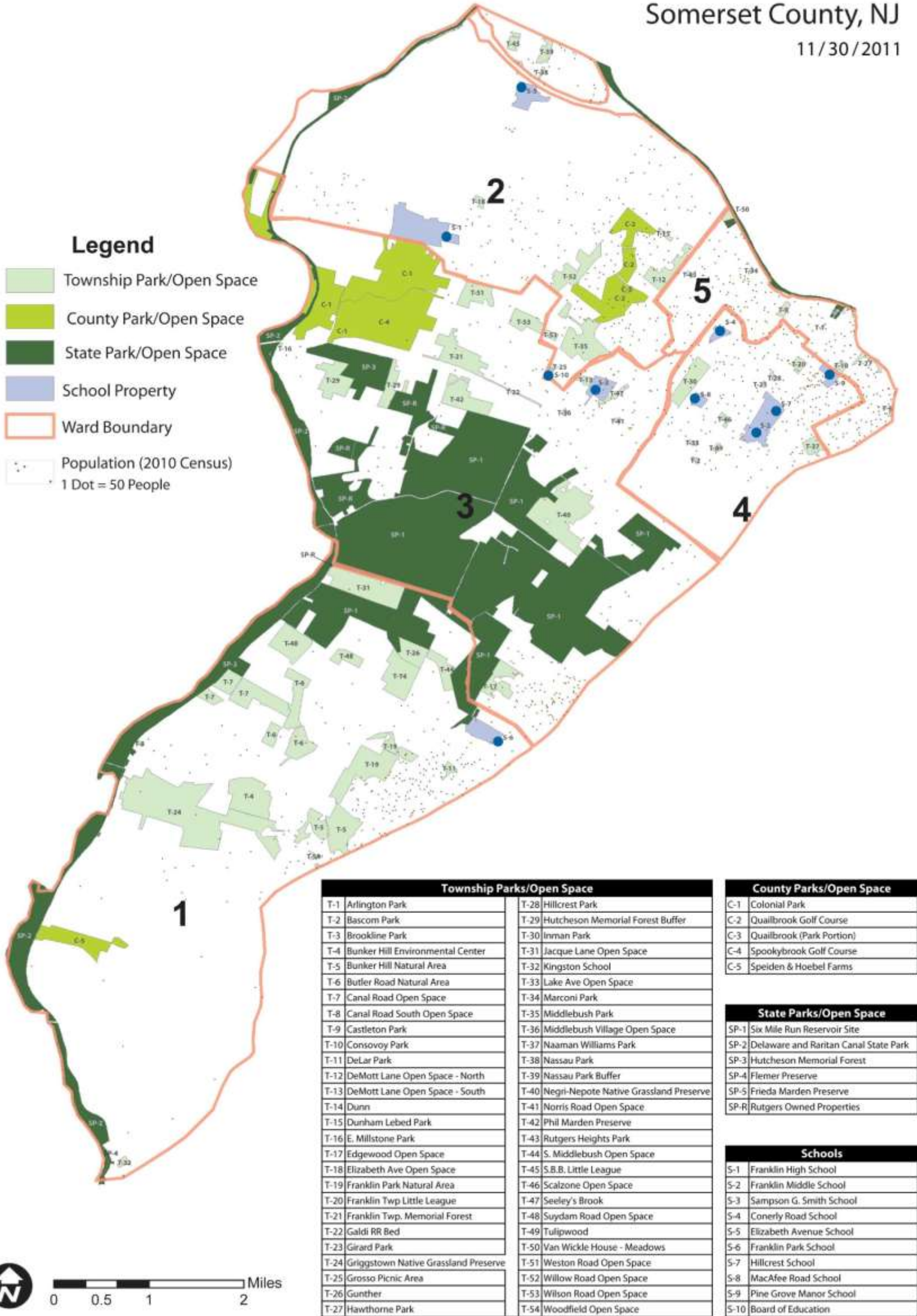
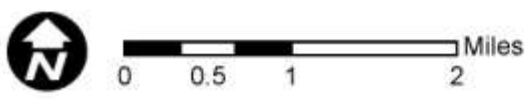
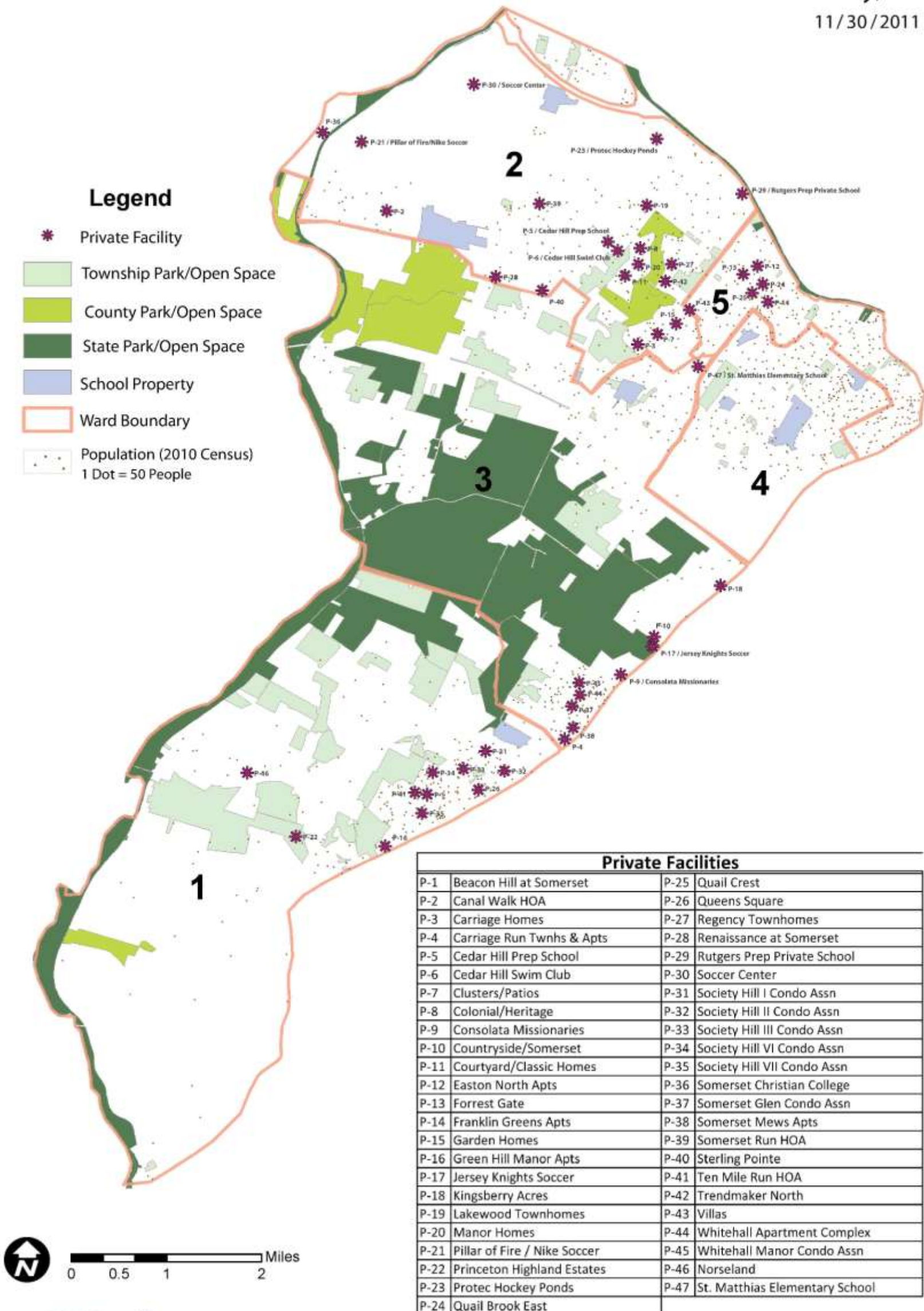


Figure 5: Private Facility Locations

# Franklin Township

## Private Facilities Map

Somerset County, NJ  
11/30/2011



### **C. Qualitative Park Assessments**

Summary forms for each Township owned park are included in Appendix B. There are two sets of forms for each park. One set of forms (Appendix B1) identifies all of the facilities, sizes and conditions within each park with comments about the existing facilities. The second set of forms (Appendix B2) identifies the estimated value of needed repairs to the existing parks and a priority level of the need for the repairs, as well as comments concerning the improvement needs.

Items pertaining to safety and accessibility issues are a high priority and are recommended for immediate attention. Items that are needed but are not safety or access related and that will be needed in 2-5 years are in the medium category. Items that are upgrades or replacements as the park ages, such as playground replacements, are low priority and in the 5-10 year range.



## Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

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#### **IV. Needs Analysis**

##### **A. General**

The Needs Analysis consists of the following elements:

1. The classification of the existing parks and recreation facilities into standard park classifications.
2. A discussion of the parks and recreation area needs by park types.
3. A discussion of the geographic distribution of parks and recreation facilities.
4. A summary of the public workshops and stakeholder group discussions.
5. A summary of the parks and recreation surveys that were accomplished in 2011.
6. The summary of the benchmark survey that was accomplished among communities in New Jersey.
7. Facilities Needs Analysis and Level of Service Standards based upon accepted standards and guidelines, past experience of the Consultant, and agreed upon by the Plan Steering Committee.
8. A discussion of recent trends in parks, recreation, and leisure service.
9. A summary of the overall parks and recreation facility needs.

##### **B. Park and Recreation Area Needs by Park Type and Planning Areas**

The beginning portion of Section III included Table 9, which identifies the various classifications of parks and recreation areas. These are consistent with the National Recreation and Park Association Guidelines. A general set of goals for the various park types was established by the Consulting Team and the Plan Steering Committee as the Level of Service Standards for Franklin Township. These goals are consistent with several recent plans completed by the Consultant and communities throughout the nation. Table 13, Parks and Recreation Land Level of Service Standards, provides a breakdown of the needs for Franklin Township. This table includes many community parks and neighborhood parks that are part of school sites because they do serve some of the park needs for residents.

In general, Table 13 identifies that there is currently a shortage of about 416 acres of Community Park land, about 63 acres of Neighborhood Park land, and about 27 acres of Mini-Park land. Currently, there is a surplus of County, General and Special Use Park Land. Year 2025 projections indicate that the Community Park deficit will increase to about 521 acres.

The lower portion of Table 13 identifies the needs with the privately owned park land considered.

Table 14 illustrates the population goals for various facilities agreed upon by the Plan Steering Committee and reflect the community's needs based upon the stakeholder group meetings, public workshops, and surveys of residents. The negative numbers indicate the facilities with a shortage. The largest deficit in 2011 is for soccer fields with 9.6 needed. Other significant deficits are indicated for picnic shelters, baseball fields, football fields, volleyball courts, and indoor game courts.

The lower portion of Table 14 identifies the facility needs if the privately owned facilities are considered. The top portion is a better reflector of the overall needs as it considers the facilities that are available to all residents.

Table 13: Parks and Recreation Land Level Service Standards

**Recommended Level of Service Standards - Developed Park Land**  
**Parks and Recreation Needs by Park Type**  
**Franklin Township, Somerset County, New Jersey**

Uses recommended standards from the 2005 Somerset County Park Commission Capital Facilities Plan

<b>County, Township, and School Board Owned Land</b>										
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>Existing Developed Acres</b>	<b>Recommended Acres/1000 Population</b>	<b>2011 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2011 Surplus Deficit(-)</b>	<b>2015 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2015 Surplus(+) Deficit(-)</b>	<b>2020 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2020 Surplus(+) Deficit(-)</b>	<b>2025 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2025 Surplus(+) Deficit(-)</b>
Mini-Park	3.97	0.5	31	-27	34	-30	36	-32	38	-34
Neighborhood <sup>1</sup>	62.05	2	125	-63	136	-73	143	-81	151	-89
Community <sup>2</sup>	82.83	8	498	-416	542	-459	573	-490	604	-521
County General and Special Use	725	10	623	102	678	47	716	9	755	-30
Linear	300	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>1173.85</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>1277</b>	<b>-403</b>	<b>1389</b>	<b>-515</b>	<b>1468</b>	<b>-594</b>	<b>1547</b>	<b>-673</b>

1. Neighborhood Parks include 22.2 acres at school sites.

2. Community Parks include 18.8 acres at school sites.

Population Data Source: 2010 data by the U.S. Census Bureau; 2015-2025 Population Estimates from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority + 5,000 in projection years because 2010 exceeded projections.

2010 = 62,300

2015 = 67,760

2020 = 71,625

2025 = 75,473

<b>County, Township, School Board, and HOA/Private Owned Land</b>										
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>Existing Developed Acres</b>	<b>Recommended Acres/1000 Population</b>	<b>2011 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2011 Surplus Deficit(-)</b>	<b>2015 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2015 Surplus(+) Deficit(-)</b>	<b>2020 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2020 Surplus(+) Deficit(-)</b>	<b>2025 Recommended Acres</b>	<b>2025 Surplus(+) Deficit(-)</b>
Mini-Park <sup>1</sup>	42.75	0.5	31	12	34	9	36	7	38	5
Neighborhood <sup>2</sup>	101.25	2	125	-23	136	-34	143	-42	151	-50
Community <sup>3</sup>	82.83	8	498	-416	542	-459	573	-490	604	-521
County General and Special Use	725	10	623	102	678	47	716	9	755	-30
Linear	300	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>1251.83</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>1277</b>	<b>-325</b>	<b>1389</b>	<b>-437</b>	<b>1468</b>	<b>-516</b>	<b>1547</b>	<b>-595</b>

1. Mini-Parks include 38.78 acres at HOA sites.

2. Neighborhood Parks include 22.2 acres at school sites and 29.2 acres at HOA sites.

3. Community Parks include 18.8 acres at school sites.



**C. Distribution of Parks and Facilities (Figure 6)**

Figure 6, Existing Park Service Areas Map, illustrates an inventory of the existing parks, schools, private parks, and identifies the service areas for each of these various types of parks. The dark blue circles indicate areas within a quarter mile of a mini-park, neighborhood park, community park or county park. The medium blue circles identify areas within a half mile of a neighborhood park, community park, or county park. The light blue indicates areas within one mile of a community or county park and the pink color indicates the areas within two miles of a county or state park. This map serves to indicate the gaps where neighborhoods or communities are not served very well by parks.

This figure indicates that most of the populated areas are served by at least a neighborhood park.

**D. Geographic Distribution of Facilities**

Another analysis is a review of the geographic distribution of specific types of facilities that are provided to residents. These are indicated on Figures 7-14. These maps indicate the parks and schools with the various facilities. Below are discussions of each of the specific facilities:

1. Parks with Picnic Areas and/or Shelters

Figure 7 identifies that the majority of the picnic areas and shelters are located mainly on the western edge of the Township. The main areas lacking picnic areas and shelters are the southeastern portions of Ward 3, and the Franklin Park area, located in Ward 1.

2. Parks with Playgrounds

Figure 8 identifies the location of playgrounds throughout the Township, which are fairly well distributed amongst the school locations. The densest concentration of playgrounds exist at private facilities in the Franklin Park area and east and west of DeMott Lane in the northern reaches of the Township.

3. Parks with Baseball/Softball Fields

Figure 9 identifies the location of parks or schools with baseball and/or softball fields throughout the Township. The main area lacking fields is the Franklin Park area. The fields that do exist here are located at private facilities. The largest park with baseball/softball accommodations is located in the northwestern portion of Ward 3.

4. Parks/Schools with Football Fields

Figure 10 clearly identifies that there are only two locations within the project area that have football fields, with those being Franklin High

School and Franklin Middle School. The Middle School is home to Pop Warner Football and this facility is in need of upgrades. The High School field is not available to the public or youth leagues to use because the home side bleachers and restrooms have not yet been completed.

5. Parks/Schools with Tennis Courts

Figure 11 clearly indicates that only two schools have tennis courts, which are Franklin High School and Franklin Middle School. A number of courts are located at private facilities throughout the Franklin Park area and the southeastern portion of Ward 2 and western portion of Ward 5. Public courts are available at Inman and Williams Parks, both in Ward 4, along with the Middle School courts. Colonial Park also provides 8 courts.

6. Parks/Schools with Outdoor Basketball Courts

Figure 12 identifies the locations of outdoor basketball courts at parks and schools in the Township. The yellow indicates basketball courts at a variety of sites with gaps along the western edge of the Township and within Ward 3.

7. Parks/Schools with Soccer Fields

Figure 13 identifies the locations of soccer fields within the Township. A majority of the fields are located at school properties, while a few are located at private facilities. Middlebush Park has the only full-size Township-owned fields, whereas Inman Park and Dunham Lebed Park have smaller play fields. There is a clear gap in the southern half of the Township.

8. Parks/Schools with Trails

Figure 14 identifies the location of trails throughout the Township. Paved trails exist at Colonial Park, Quail Brook Park and Naaman Williams Park. Colonial Park is the only facility shown to have paved and unpaved trails. The majority of unpaved trails are located within Ward 3 and along the western edge of the Township at the D&R Canal State Park. Figure 15 illustrates the Trails Plan from the 2008 Franklin Township Pathways and Trails Plan. In addition to the paved trails in parks, the Township also has developed 16.6 miles of paved trails adjacent to roadways including the following:

<b>Bike Paths Adjacent to Roads</b>	<b>Miles</b>
Easton Ave (btwn Cedar Grove Lane & Franklin Blvd)	2.9
Demott Lane (btwn Dellwood Lane & Amwell Rd)	2.0
JFK Blvd (btwn Easton Ave & Amwell Road/Hamilton Ave)	2.0
Dellwood Lane (btwn Demott Lane & Willow Ave)	0.4

<b>Bike Paths Adjacent to Roads</b>	<b>Miles</b>
Willow Ave (btwn Dellwood Lane & New Brunswick Rd)	0.6
New Brunswick Road (btwn Demott Lane & Cedar Grove Lane)	1.1
Cedar Grove Lane (btwn New Brunswick Rd & Treptow Rd)	0.7
Martino Road (btwn Demott Lane & Wilson Rd)	0.8
Treptow Rd (btwn Cedar Grove Lane & Rue Cezanne)	0.1
Weston Road (btwn Cedar Grove Lane & Elizabeth Ave)	0.7
Mettlers Road (btwn Weston Road & School House Road)	0.6
School House Road (btwn Mettlers Road & Weston Canal Rd)	0.9
Van Cleef Road (between Grouser Rd & Intersection of Amwell and Cedar Grove Lane)	1.1
Stewart Ave (btwn Rt 27 & Beekman Rd)	0.6
Beekman Ave (btwn Rt 27 & Chelsea Court)	0.6
Edward Dr-Rachel Ct – Society Hill Blvd	1
S. Middlebush Road (between Verrazzano Dr & Arthur Glick Blvd)	0.5
<b>Township Parks</b>	
Naaman Williams	1.0
<b>County Parks</b>	
Colonial Park	2.0
Quail Brook (Park Portion)	.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.1</b>



Figure 6: Existing Park Service Areas

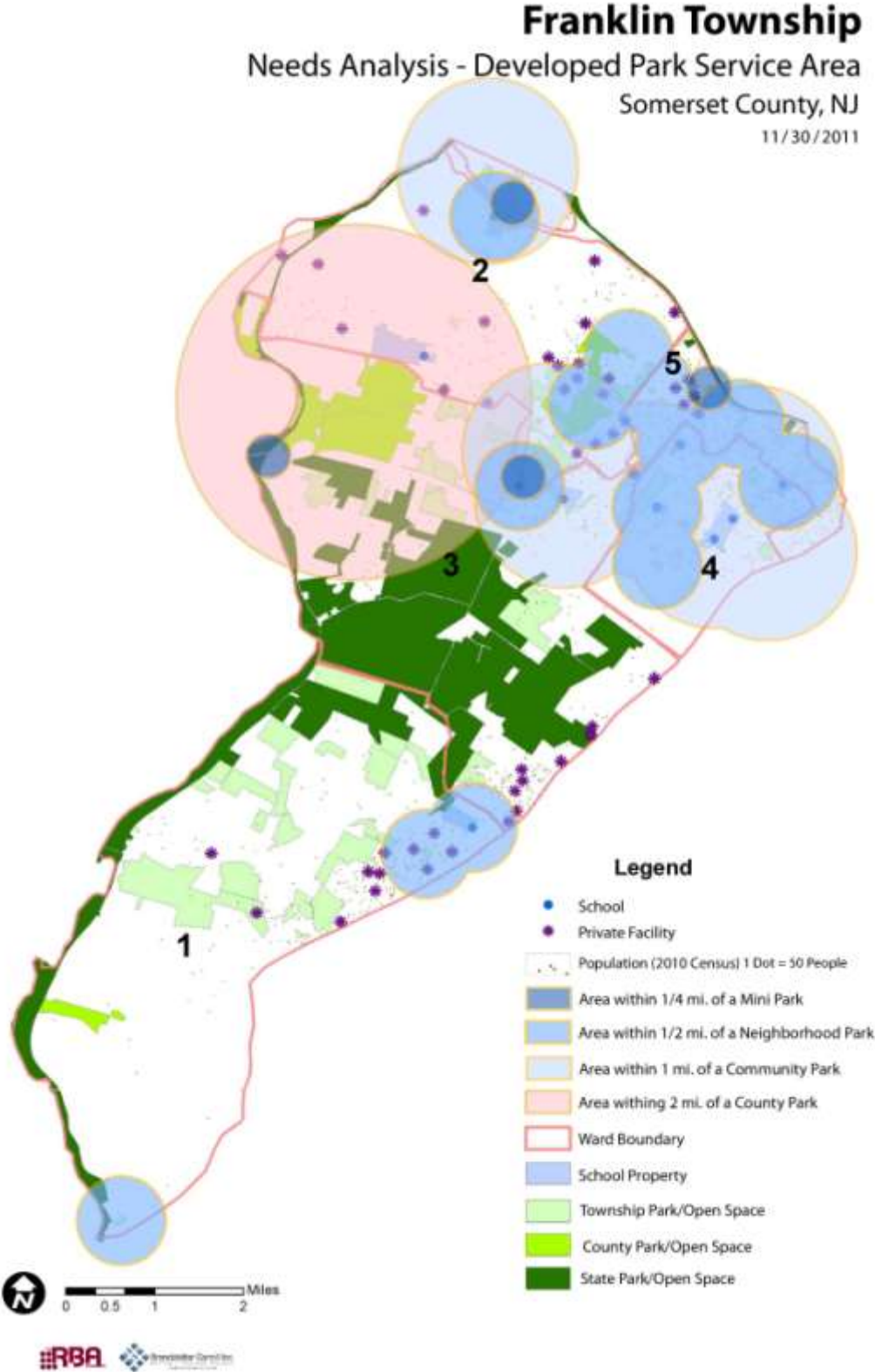


Figure 7: Parks with Picnic Areas and/or Shelters

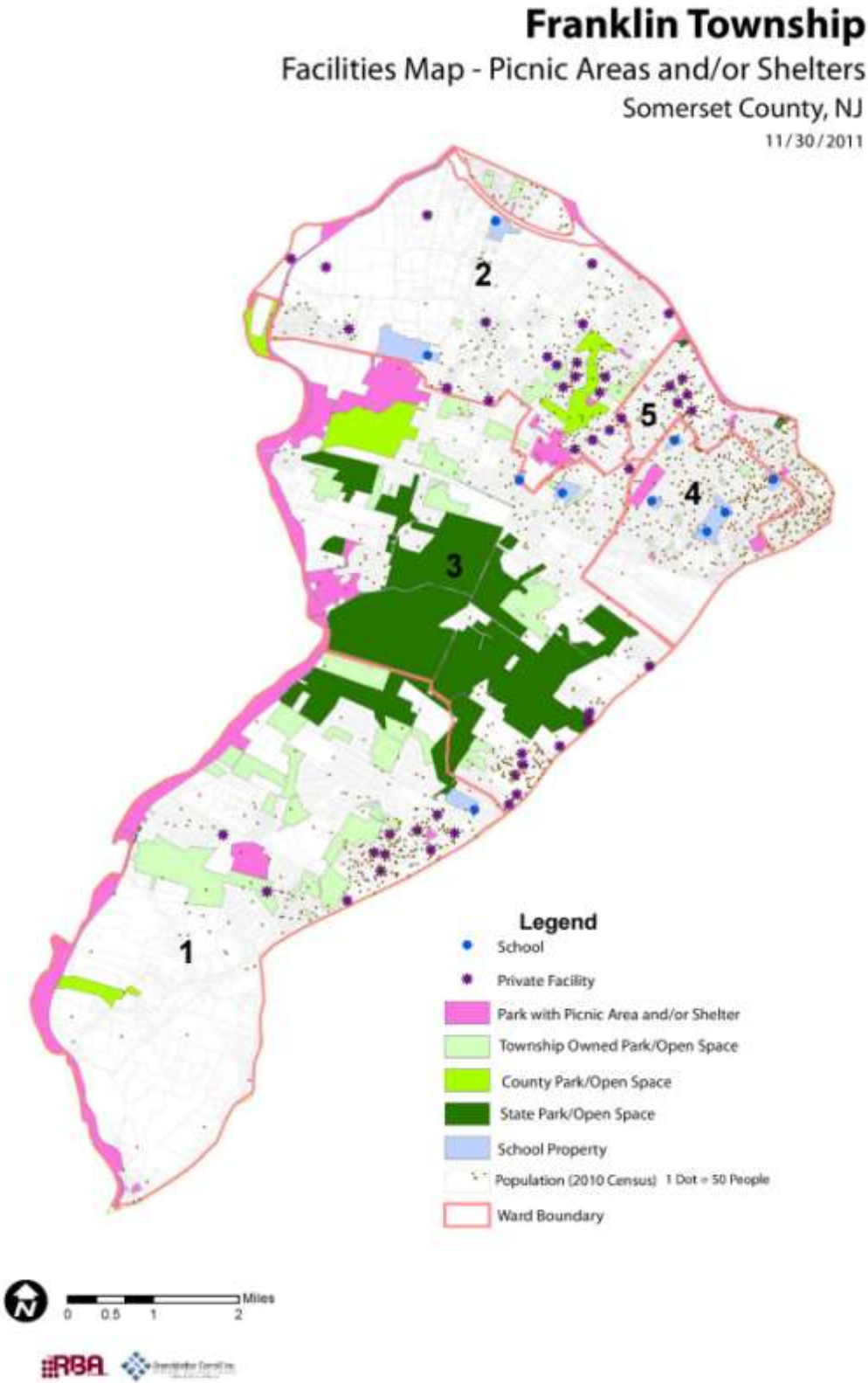


Figure 8: Parks and Schools with Playgrounds

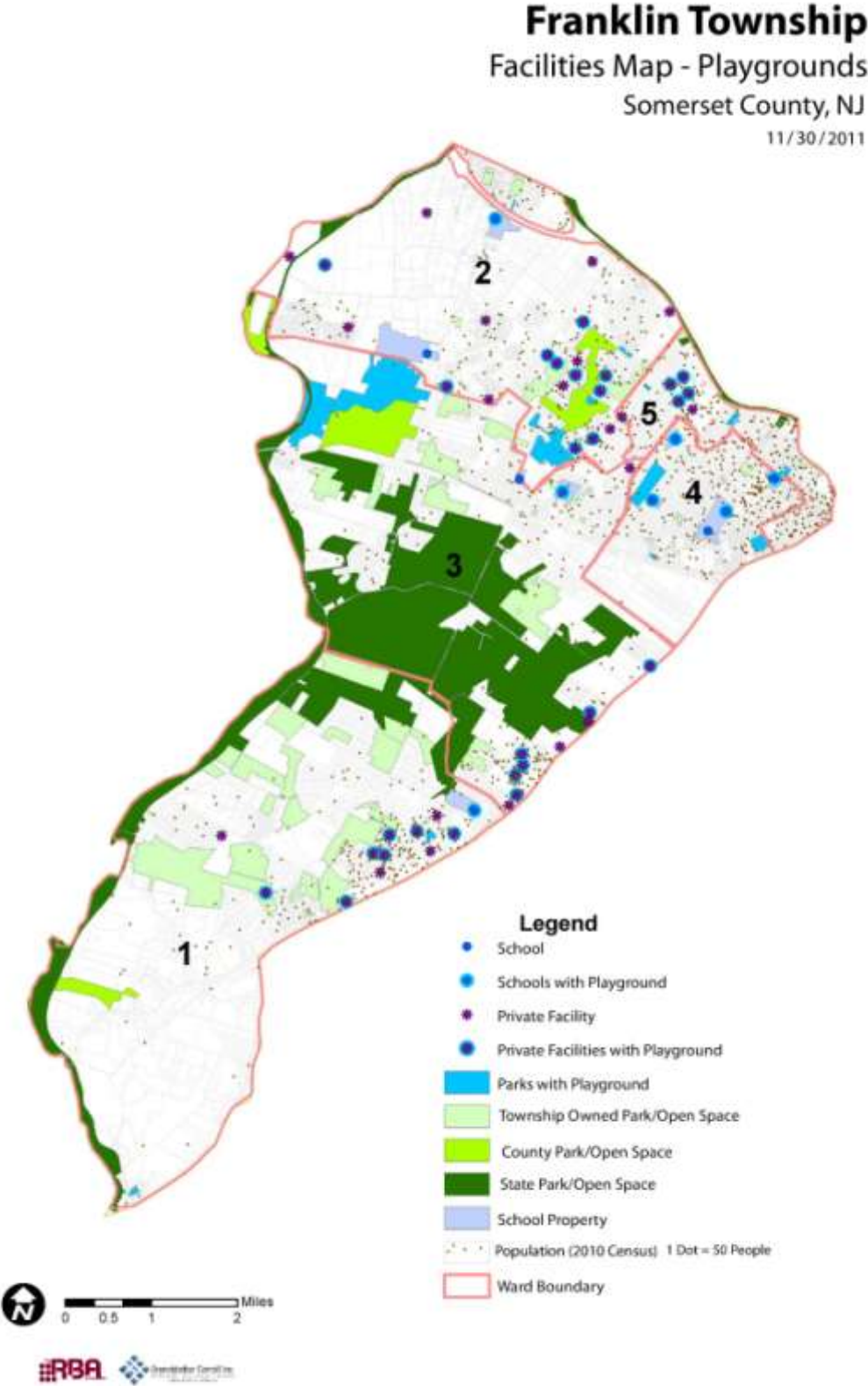


Figure 9: Parks/Schools with Baseball/Softball Fields

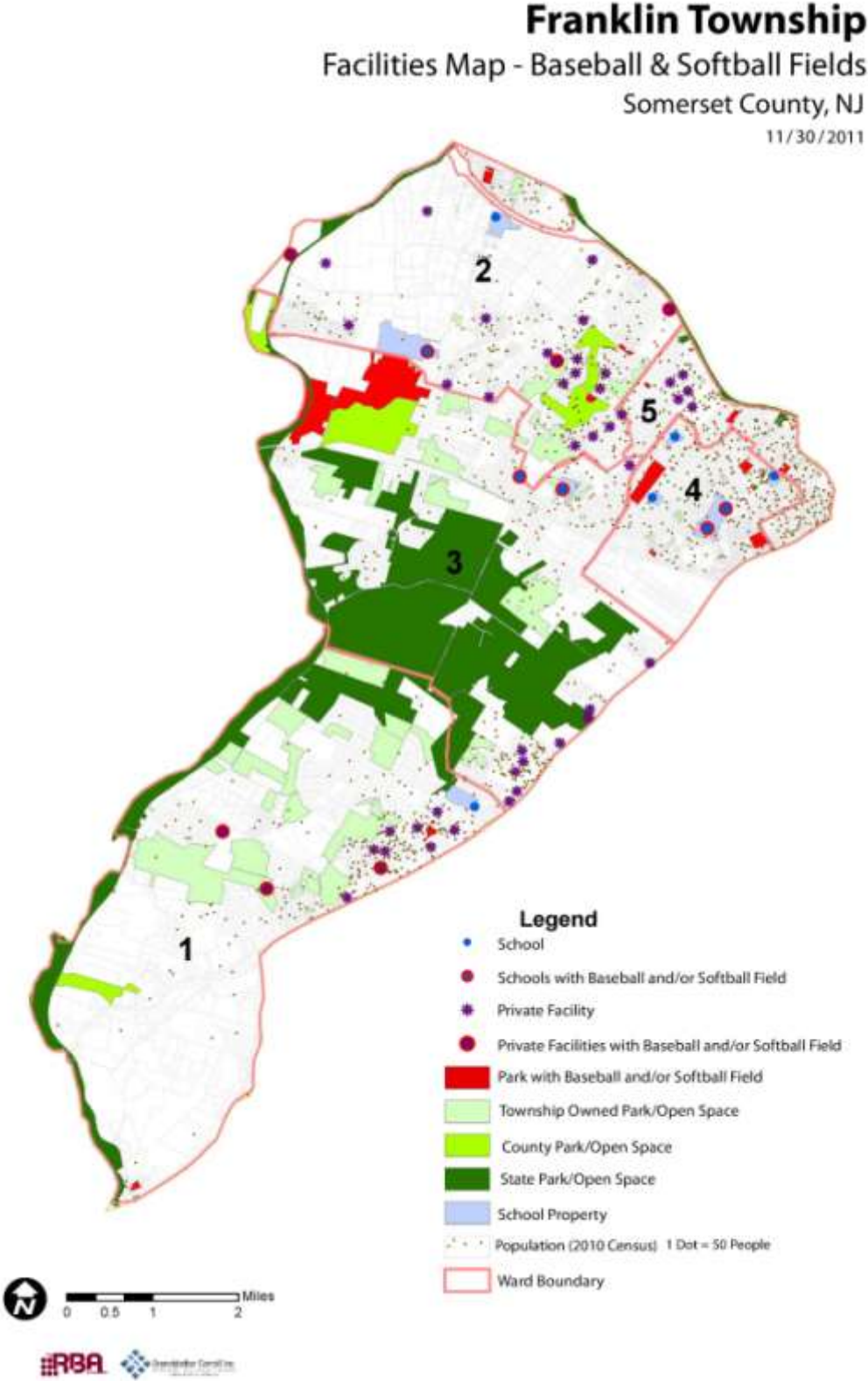


Figure 10: Parks/Schools with Football Fields

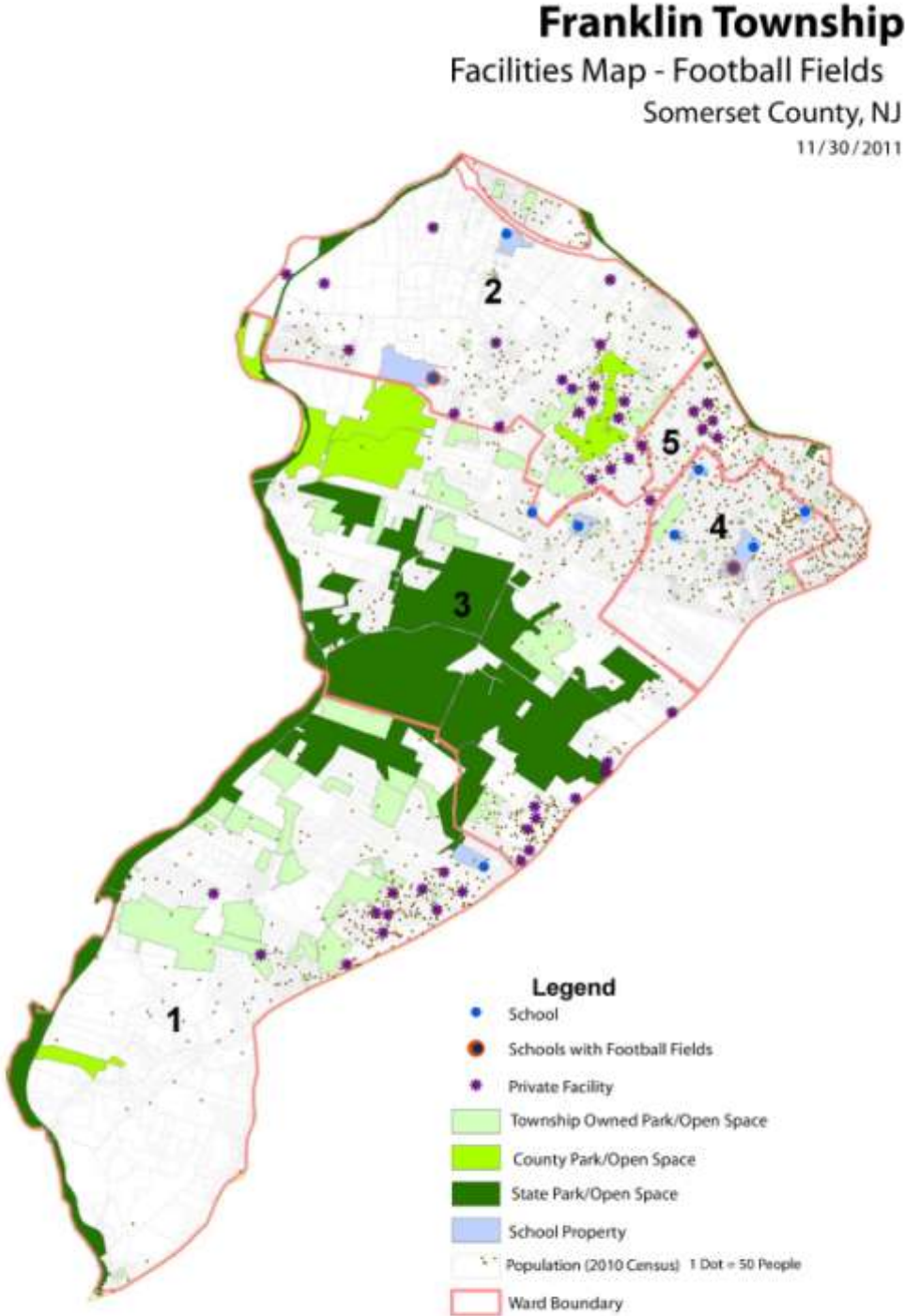


Figure 11: Parks/Schools with Tennis Courts

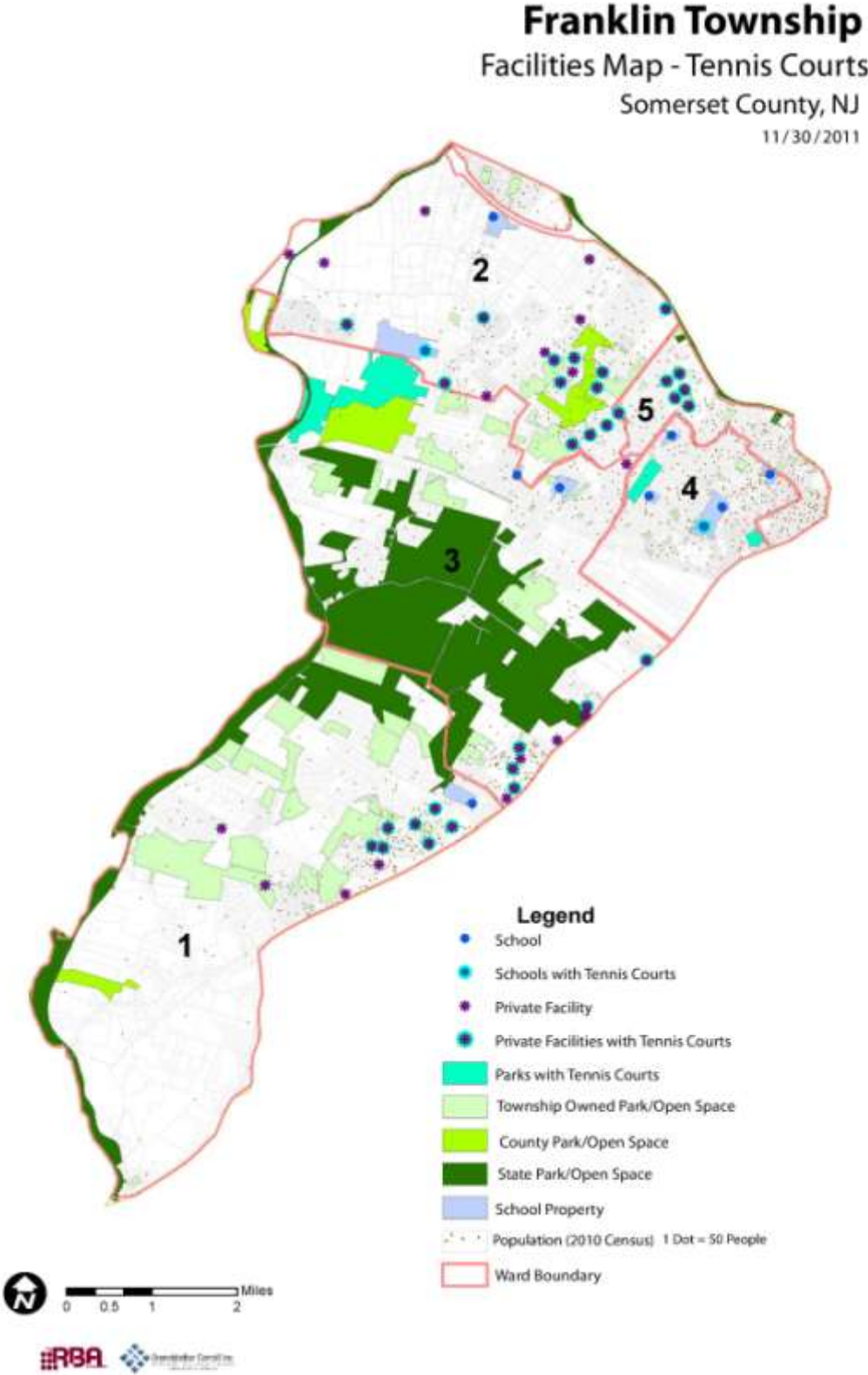


Figure 12: Parks/Schools with Outdoor Basketball Courts

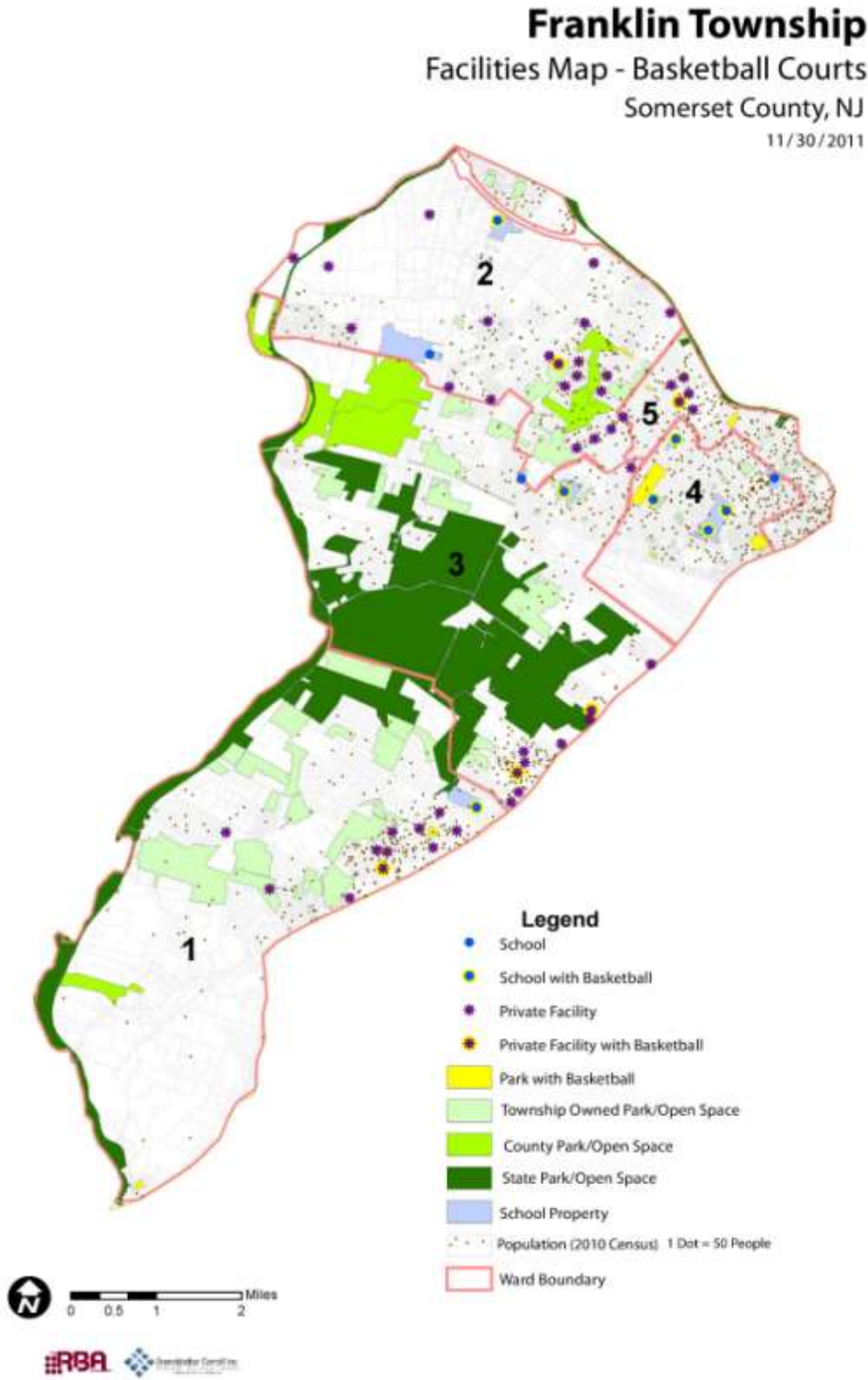


Figure 13: Parks/Schools with Soccer Fields

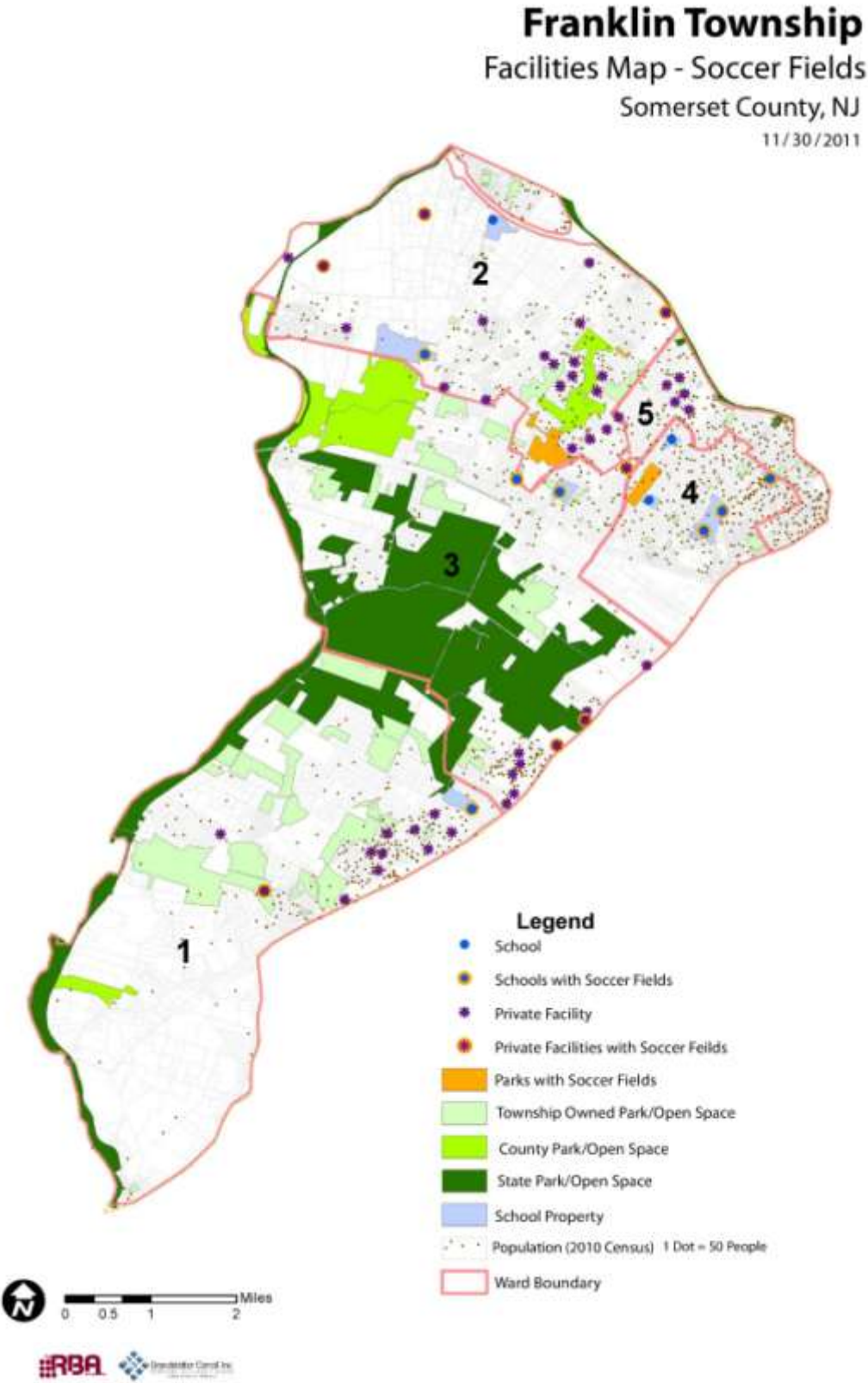




Figure 14: Parks/Schools with Trails

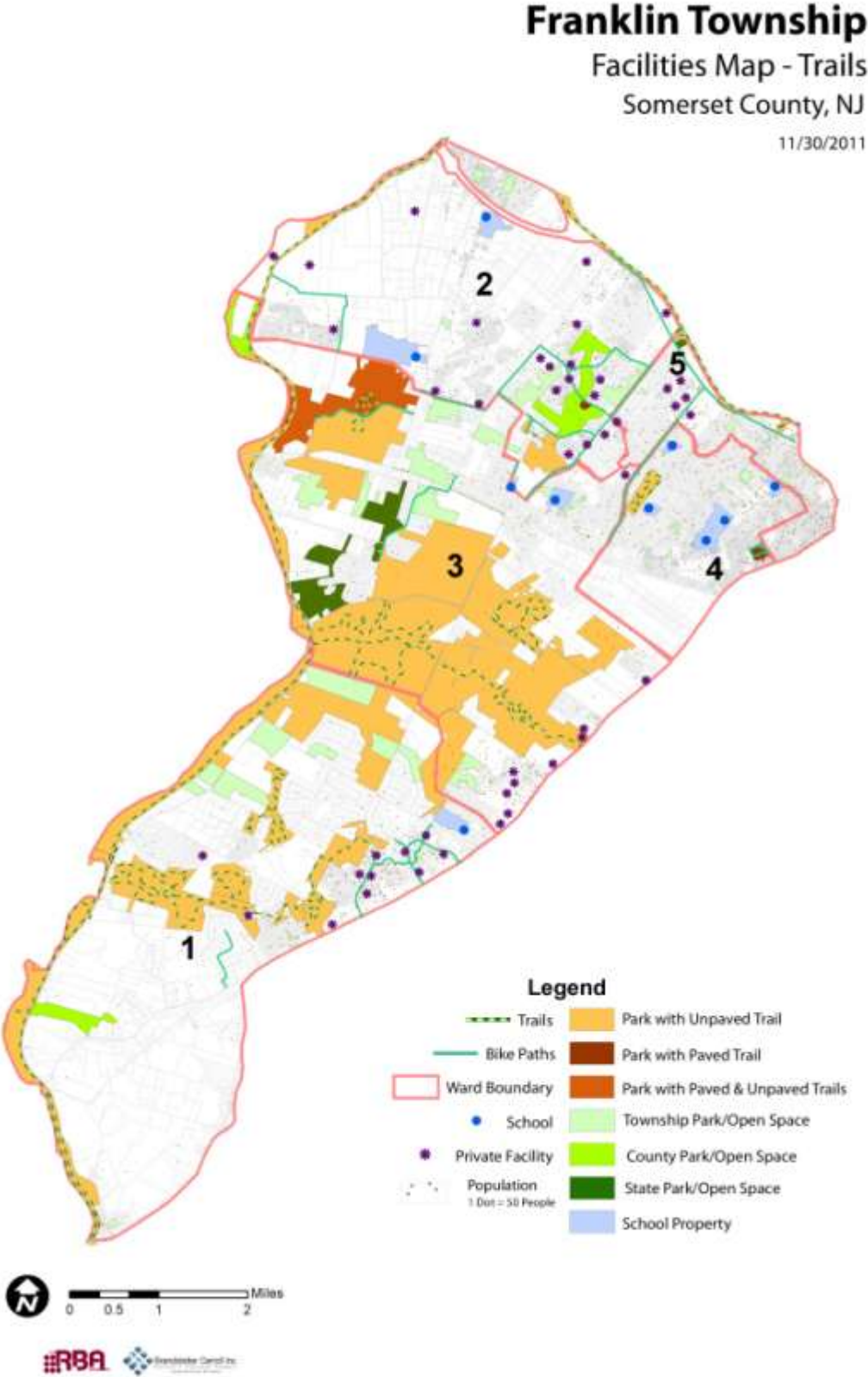
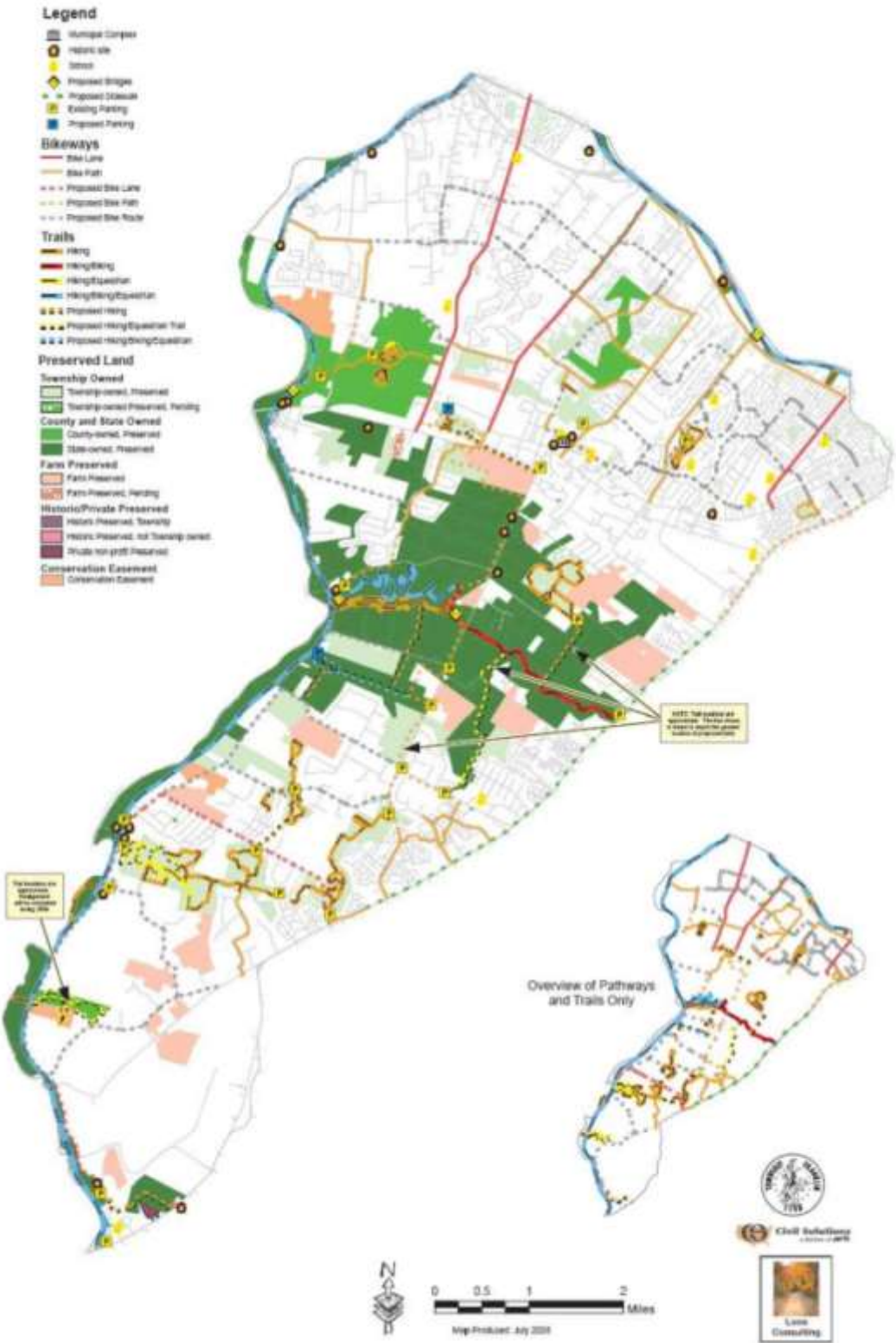


Figure 15: Pathways and Trails Plan 2008



**E. Citizens Served per Park Acre**

In comparison to typical level of service standards used throughout the state for developed park land, Franklin Township is well below the standard for most types of park land including mini-parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks. County, General, and Special Use parks is the only type of park land with a surplus of acres. As indicated previously in Table 13, there is a deficit of 403 acres within the Township for developed park land.

The Park and Recreation Department Benchmarking analysis included a survey that was sent to several other departments throughout the region including boroughs and townships. These tables are included in Appendix F. A comparison to 19 other communities in New Jersey indicates that Franklin Township developed park land (not including golf courses, school, or private land) provides a level of 153 citizens per acre. The average of the other communities was 256 and the median is 153. The national median of departments is 132 citizens per developed park acre.

Franklin Township provides 6.5 total active park acres per 1000 residents (8.35 with schools) compared to the average of 7.68 and median of 6.52. Therefore, Franklin Township provides less than the average and slightly less than the median of the other communities.

**F. Public Workshops**

A complete summary of the public workshop, which was held on April 14, 2011 at the Senior/Community Center at the beginning of the master plan process, is included in Appendix C.

The public workshop asked people where they currently go for parks and recreation, what they like about Franklin Township Parks and recreation, what they do not like or what is missing from the parks and recreation or what can be improved, and finally what is their vision for the future of parks and recreation. The people in attendance at this meeting visit a variety of parks within the Township, but also attend parks and facilities in the surrounding communities.

The most positive aspects of parks and recreation in Franklin Township include the following:

1. Peace, quiet, nature
2. Being able to play ball in town
3. Animal watching
4. Convenience
5. Space for all interests
6. Community diversity
7. Scenic Vistas
8. Senior Center

From these meetings, a **public workshop vision** was established which included the following components:

1. Facilities
  - a. Athletic Fields
  - b. Indoor Recreation/Community Center
  - c. Indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities
  - d. Amphitheater
  - e. Park facilities distributed equally throughout the Township
  - f. Basic civic facilities in the parks such as, restrooms, seating, parking, storage, safety, and lighting.
  - g. Improved trails
  - h. Preserving open space for conservation and wildlife/farmland
  - i. The land across from Marconi Park should be purchased to develop a park.
  - j. The Franklin Historical Museum should include Marconi, canal history and an environmental education center.
2. Access
  - a. Handicap access to the parks
  - b. Pedestrian access and sidewalks
  - c. Pedestrian biking town wide
  - d. Public access and programs to Canal activities
  - e. Better access to the Canal
  - f. Moveable bridge to access the tow path and bring park users to the Easton Avenue Businesses.
3. Communication and Coordination
  - a. A community bulletin board for all recreation, historic, and public programs including the Township website.
  - b. Signage and a digital sign board to highlight activities.

### **G. Stakeholder Meetings**

The Planning Team met with several organizations and staff members related to the delivery of parks and recreation services in Franklin Township and the immediate area. The groups included the following organizations:

1. Athletic Organizations & Interests
  - a. Adult Softball Group

- b. Hershey Track and Field
  - c. Franklin Little League
  - d. Somerset South Boundbrook Little League
  - e. Franklin Township Soccer
  - f. Franklin Township OPO Warner
  - g. FTWC (Franklin Township Wrestling Club)
2. Boards and Commissions
- a. Land Use and Open Space Committee of the Council
  - b. Planning Board
  - c. Recreation Advisory Committee
  - d. Trails Advisory Committee
  - e. Environmental Commission
  - f. Agriculture Committee
  - g. Open Space Advisory Committee
  - h. Historic Preservation Advisory Committee
3. Community Organizations
- a. School Board Members
  - b. Kingston Village Advisory Committee
  - c. Chamber of Commerce at the Marconi Foundation
  - d. Meadows Foundation
  - e. Redevelopment Agency
  - f. Hamilton Street Business District
4. User Group Interviews
- a. Senior Citizens Group
  - b. Special Needs
  - c. Parents of Children with Disabilities
  - d. Therapeutic Recreation
5. Elected Official Interviews
- a. Council Persons

6. Staff Interviews
  - a. Senior Citizen Coordinator
  - b. Superintendent of Recreation
  - c. Parks and Recreation Foreman from the Public Works Department

Each of these groups was asked to identify their current relationship to Franklin Township, specific information about the organization and their participation in programs, and ways in which parks and recreation could be improved. Ultimately, each group was asked for their vision for the future of parks and recreation and open space in Franklin Township. Some of the key elements that were discussed in the vision items include the following:

1. General
  - a. Needs places for kids to participate in positive and active activities
  - b. Need more parks, trails and recreation facilities to promote better health
2. Athletic Fields
  - a. Multiple field complexes
  - b. More tennis courts
  - c. Synthetic multi-purpose field(s)
  - d. Develop Middlebush Park
  - e. Home for Pop Warner with lights, concessions, bleachers, etc.
  - f. Need more soccer fields
  - g. More cricket pitches with at least one lighted
  - h. Need cricket areas for youth development of the sport
  - i. Lighted adult softball field
  - j. Improved track in the community
  - k. Wrestling program needs a home facility
  - l. Desire of organizations to grow to serve more children
  - m. Need a Miracle or Challenger Field for children with disabilities
  - n. Need more inclusive athletic programs
  - o. Township should maintain fields
  - p. Expand and improve Little League sites
3. Indoor Recreation/Community Center
  - a. Need an indoor recreation and fitness complex

- b. Space for indoor sports practice
  - c. Space for swimming, badminton, wrestling, dance and music, basketball, tennis
  - d. Youth center
  - e. Walking track for seniors
  - f. Space for therapeutic programs
  - g. Space for cultural programs
  - h. Improve the Kingston School
4. Indoor and Outdoor Aquatic Facilities
- a. Indoor pool for the High School team use and community use.
  - b. Outdoor family aquatic center
5. Amphitheater
- a. Amphitheater for a variety of activities
  - b. Concerts, plays, cultural and performing arts
  - c. Amphitheater in each ward
  - d. Bandstand in the Hamilton Street Area
6. Facilities Distributed Evenly in the Township
- a. More parks in the south
  - b. Hamilton Street park
7. Improved Parks
- a. Restrooms
  - b. Accessibility
  - c. Improved basic facilities such as lighting, parking, seating, signage, safety etc.
8. Trails
- a. Pedestrian/bike friendly town
  - b. Pedestrian bridge across Easton Ave.
  - c. Better Canal access
  - d. North/south and east/west connector trails
  - e. Cross country trails
  - f. Interconnected system of trails/bike paths/lanes

9. Communication and Coordination
  - a. Coordinated promotion of parks and programs
  - b. Improved signage
10. Open Space
  - a. Keep some open area that is not developed
  - b. Continue to acquire and preserve open space
  - c. Purchase the majority of targeted farms development rights
11. Marconi Property and Museum
  - a. Moveable bridge, park and museum at Marconi site
12. Miscellaneous Comments
  - a. Maintain and improve/restore historic sites
  - b. Nature and outdoor environmental education center
  - c. Shuttle bus to facilities
  - d. Hunting areas
  - e. Community gardens
  - f. Use parks to bridge barriers in the community

More specific information and summaries from these stakeholder groups can be found in Appendix C.

### **H. Community Attitude and Interest Survey**

#### 1. Mail/Phone Survey - Overview and Methodology

Franklin Township conducted a Community Attitude and Interest Survey during the spring of 2011 to establish priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Franklin Township. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision Inc. worked with the Steering Committee, as well as members of the Planning Team in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a random sample of 3,000 households in Franklin Township. Approximately three days after the surveys were



mailed, each household that received a survey, also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 600 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 604 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 604 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 4.0%. The survey document is included in Appendix D.

### 2. Web Survey

In addition to mail and mail/phone survey, the Consultants prepared a shorter web based survey using Survey Monkey. A total of 750 residents completed these forms with the majority of residents unsure of which ward they resided in. Note that in the tables on the following pages, the results of the web survey are the graphics with red numbers or in red boxes. A summary of the web survey is included in Appendix E. In general, the respondents to the web survey were more active in recreation activities than the random sample, which is typical of other surveys performed by the Consultants. In comparison to the random sample survey, the web respondents:

- a. Visited parks at a higher rate (94% vs. 79%)
- b. Had a lower opinion of the quality of the parks
- c. 77% felt there was a need for more parks and recreation facilities in the Township.
- d. Participated in recreation programs at a much higher rate (75% vs 31%)
- e. Ranked sports fields as a much higher need.
- f. Have a much larger need for an indoor swimming pool.
- g. Have a higher need for youth and teen programs.
- h. Ranked the expenditure of the Trust Fund for the development of new active and passive recreation and park facilities at double the amount of the mail/phone survey (\$34 vs \$17 out of \$100).
- i. More strongly support the Trust Fund.

### 3. National Benchmarking

Since 1998, Leisure Vision (a division of ETC Institute) has conducted household surveys for needs assessments, feasibility studies, customer satisfaction, fees and charges comparisons, and other parks and

recreation issues in more than 200 communities in over 35 states across the country.

The results of these surveys have provided an unparalleled data base of information to compare responses from household residents in client communities to “National Averages” and therefore provide a unique tool to “assist organizations in better decision making.” The National Benchmarking summary is included in Appendix D. Selected information is included on the charts in this section.

#### 4. Cross Tabulation

In addition to the results of the mail/phone survey included in this report, the Township Planning Department has hundreds of pages of cross tabulations. These tables illustrate the results categorized by the following

- a. Ward
- b. Age of respondent
- c. Gender of respondent
- d. Park users
- e. Household size
- f. Household type
- g. Support level for Trust Fund tax

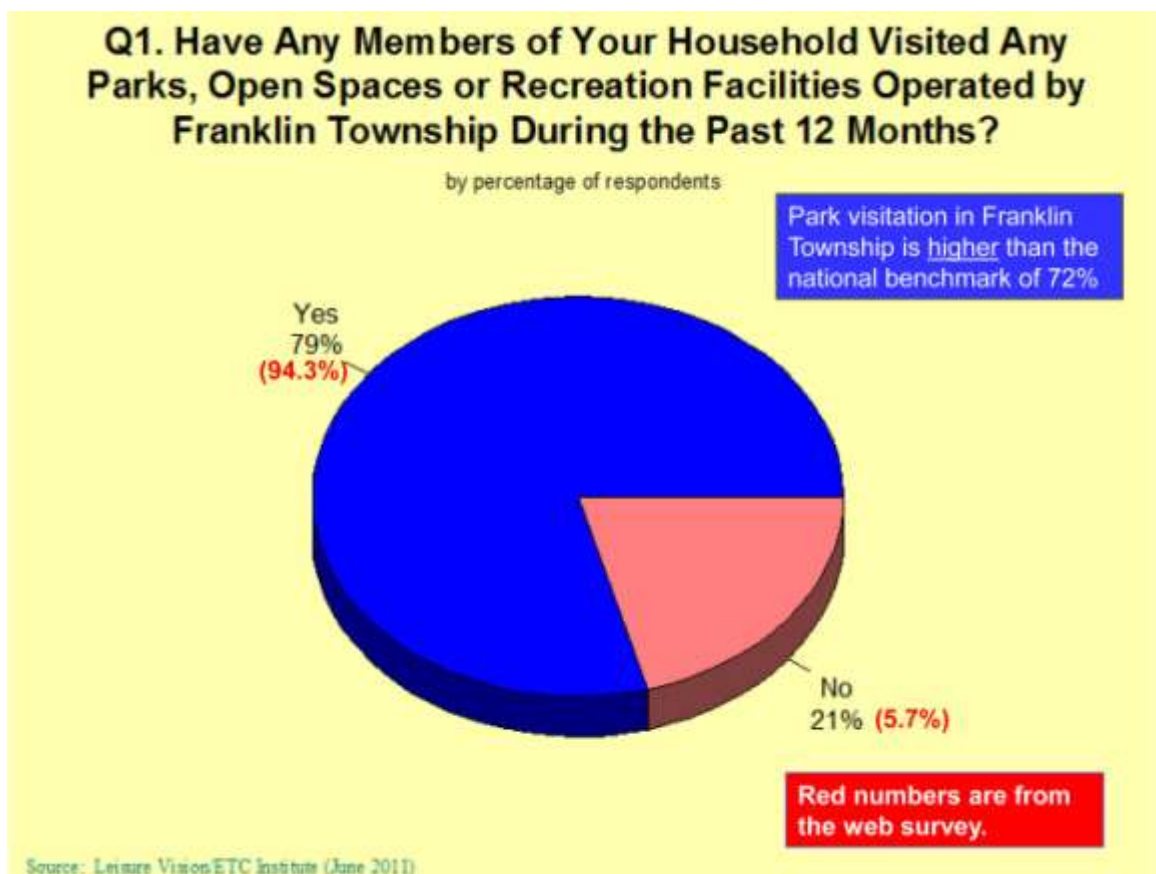
**I. Mail/Phone Survey Results**

The following pages summarize major survey findings. The items in the blue boxes indicate the comparison to the national benchmark of other surveys performed by Leisure Vision Inc. The red numbers indicate the results of the web based survey.

1. Visitation of Parks/Open Space/Facilities in Franklin Township During the Past 12 Months

Respondents were asked to indicate if any members of their household have visited any parks, open space or recreation facilities operated by Franklin Township during the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

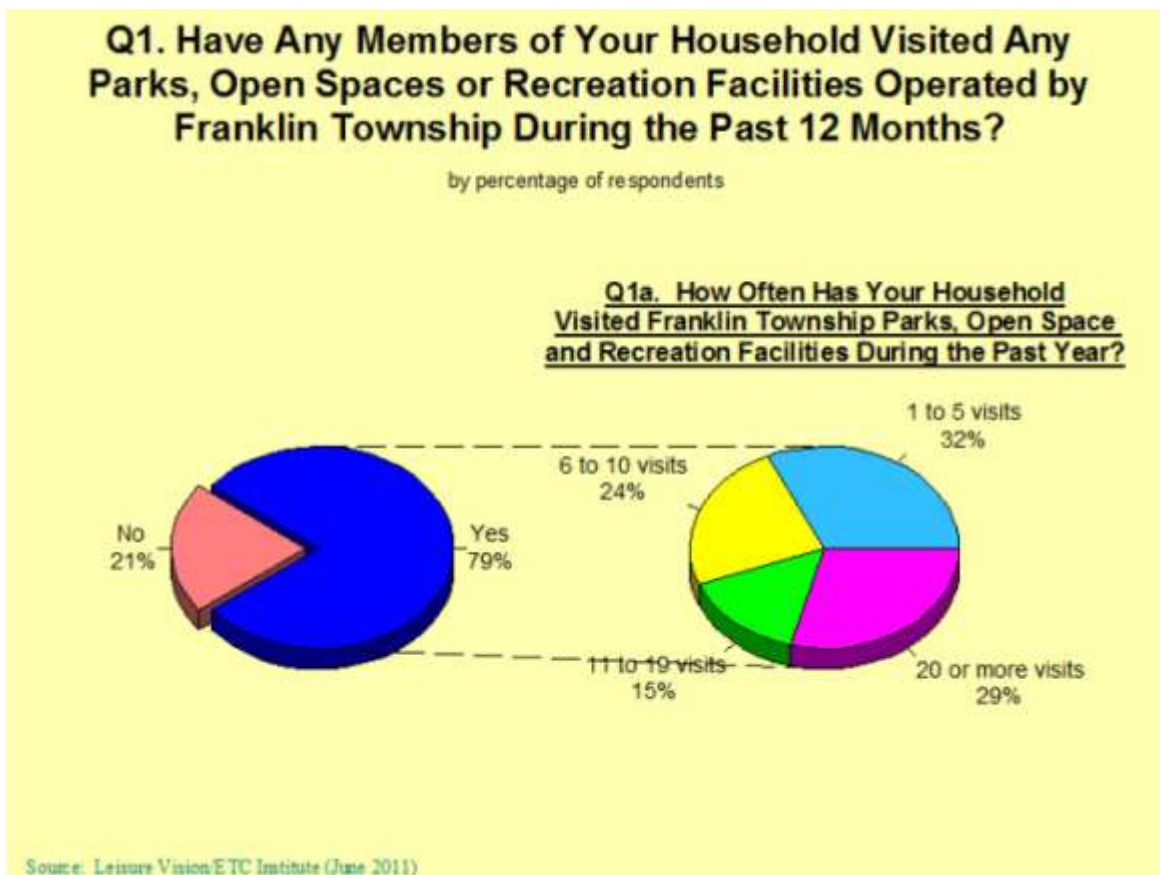
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) of households have visited parks and recreation facilities in Franklin Township during the past 12 months.



2. Frequency of Visiting Parks/open space/Facilities in Franklin Township

Households that have visited parks and recreation facilities operated by Franklin Township during the past 12 months were asked to indicate how often they've visited parks/open space/facilities during that time. The following summarizes key findings:

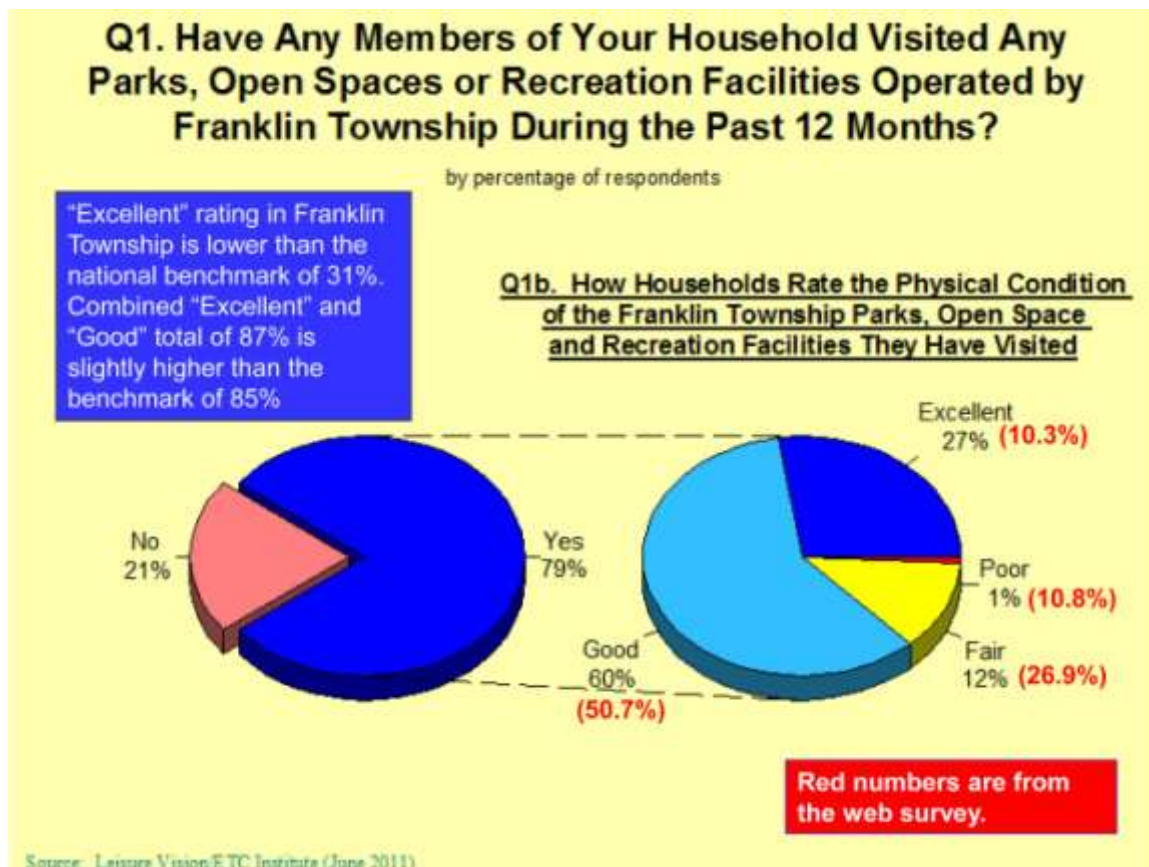
- Of the 79% of households that have visited parks, open space and recreation facilities in Franklin Township during the past 12 months, 32% have visited parks/open space/facilities at least once.



3. Physical Condition of Parks/Open Spaces/Facilities in Franklin Township

Households that have visited parks and recreation facilities operated by Franklin Township during the past 12 months were asked to rate the physical condition of all the parks/open space/facilities they have visited. The following summarizes key findings:

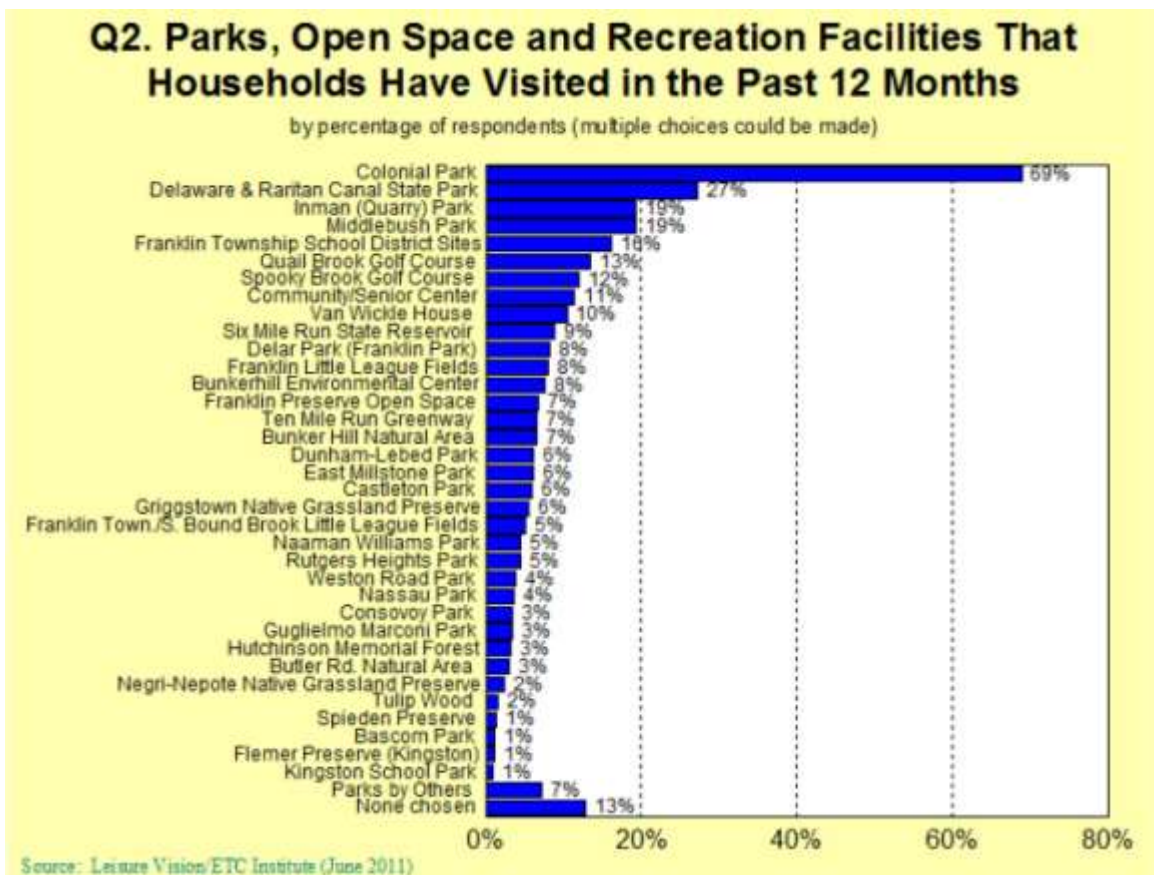
- Of the 79% of households that have visited parks, open space and recreation facilities operated by Franklin Township during the past 12 months, 27% rated the physical condition of the parks/open space/facilities they've visited as either excellent or good (60%). In addition, 12% of households rated the parks/open space/facilities as fair, and 1% rated them as poor.



4. Parks, Open Space and Recreation Facilities Visited

From a list of 37 options, respondents were asked to indicate all of the parks, open space and recreation facilities their household has visited in the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

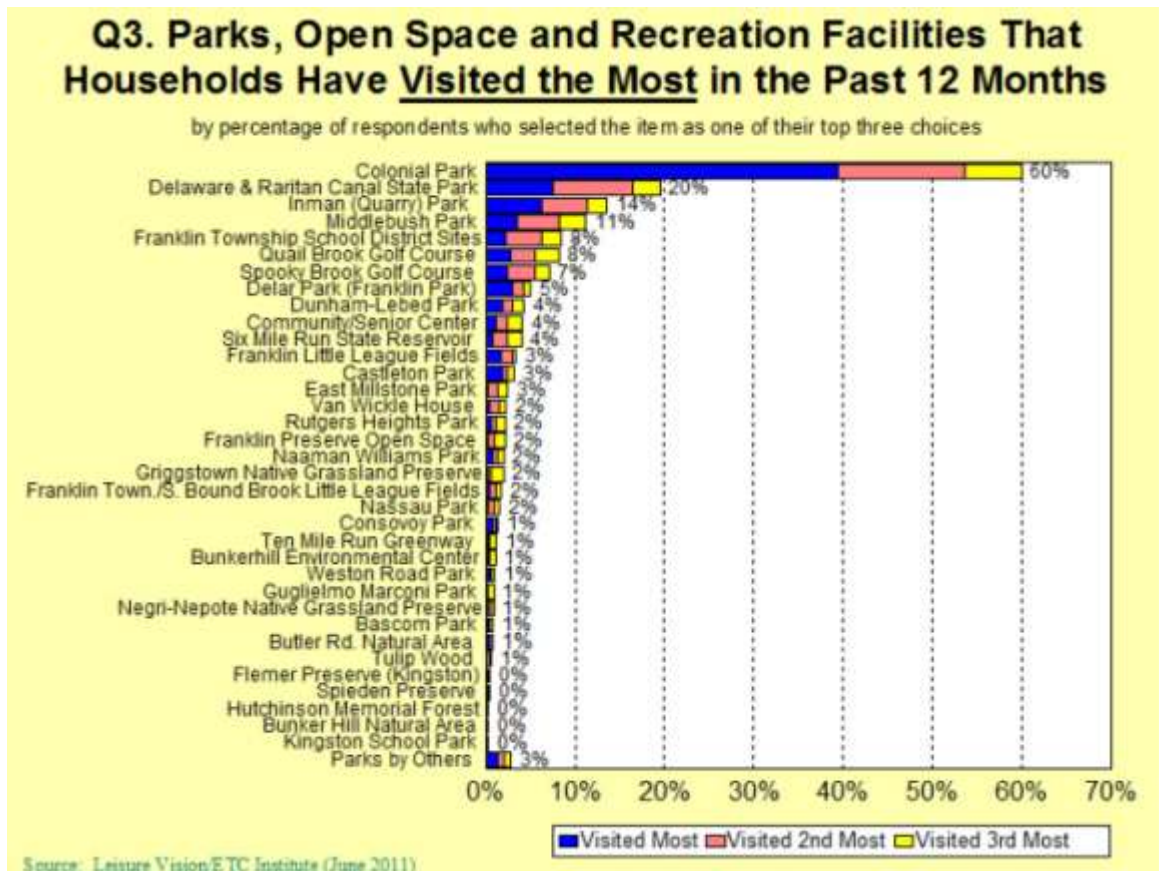
- The parks, open space and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of households have visited during the past 12 months are: Colonial Park (69%), Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park (27%), Inman (Quarry) Park (19%), and Middlebush Park (19%).



5. Parks, Open Space and Recreation Facilities Visited the Most

From a list of 37 options, respondents were asked to select the three parks, open space and recreation facilities their household has visited the most in the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

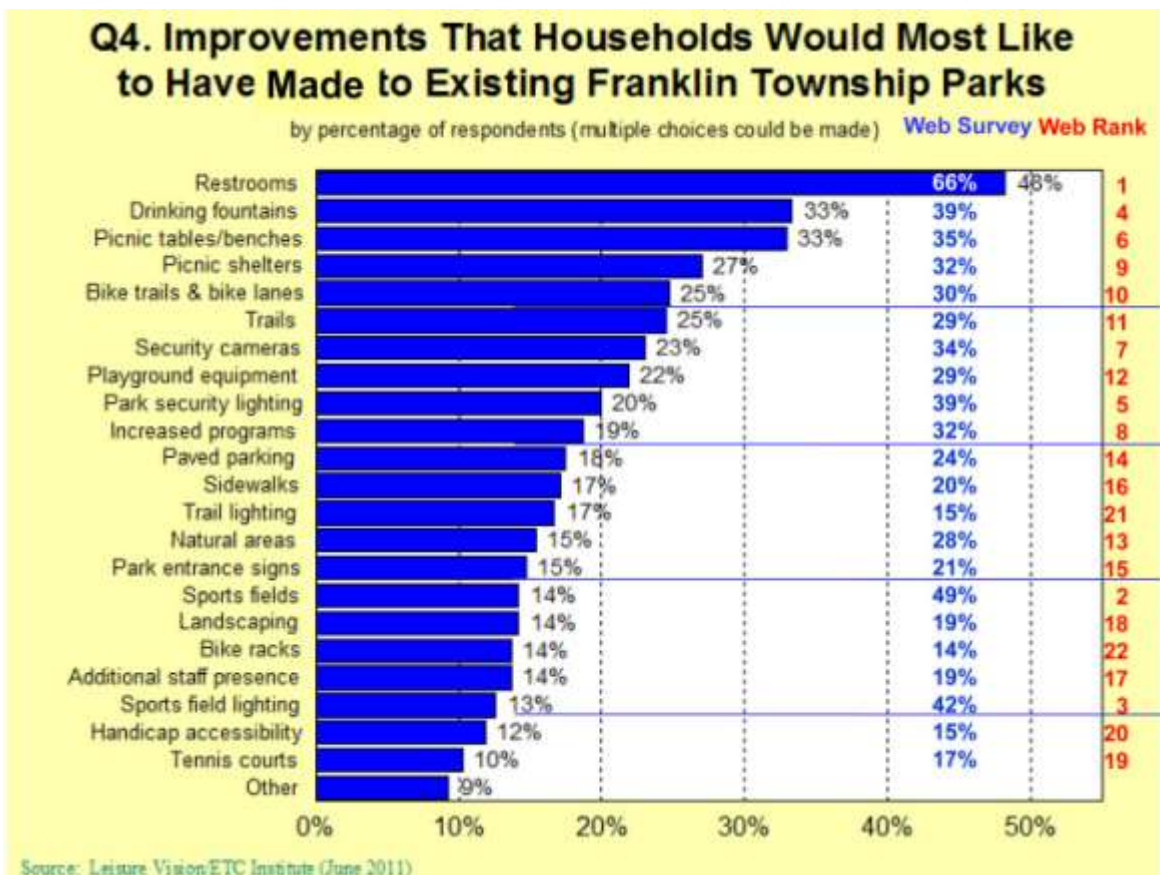
- Based on the sum of their top three choices, the parks, open space and recreation facilities that households have visited the most in the past 12 months are: Colonial Park (60%), Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park (20%), and Inman (Quarry) Park (14%). It should also be noted that Colonial Park had the highest percentage of households select it as their first choice as the parks, open space and recreation facility their household has visited the most in the past 12 months.



6. Improvements to Existing Franklin Township Parks

From a list of 12 items that could be performed by Franklin Township to improve existing Franklin Township parks, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each function. The following summarizes key findings:

- The improvements respondents would most like to have made to existing parks are: restrooms (66%), drinking fountains (33%), and picnic tables/benches (33%).

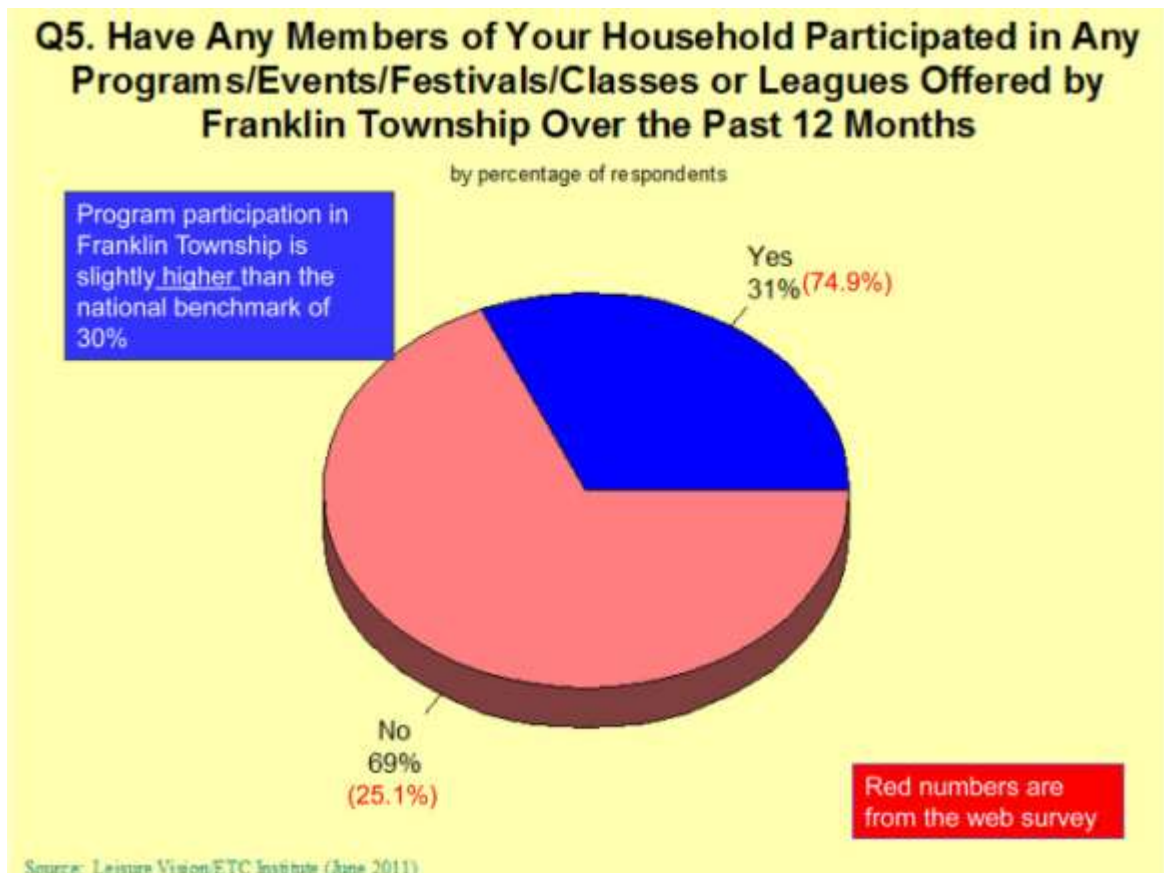




7. Participation in Recreation Programs in the Past 12 Months

Respondents were asked to indicate if any members of their household have participated in any recreation programs over the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

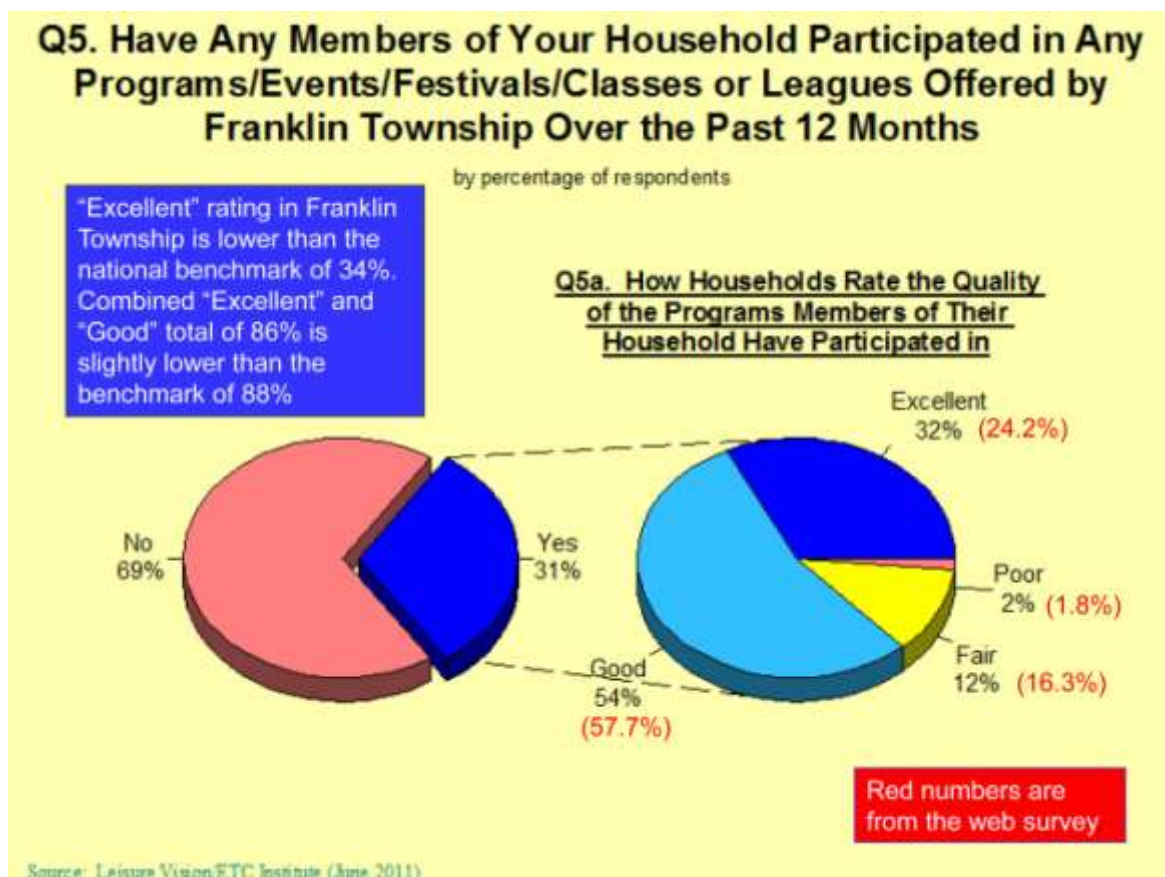
- Thirty-one percent (31%) of households have participated in recreation programs over the past 12 months.



8. Rating the Quality of Recreation Programs

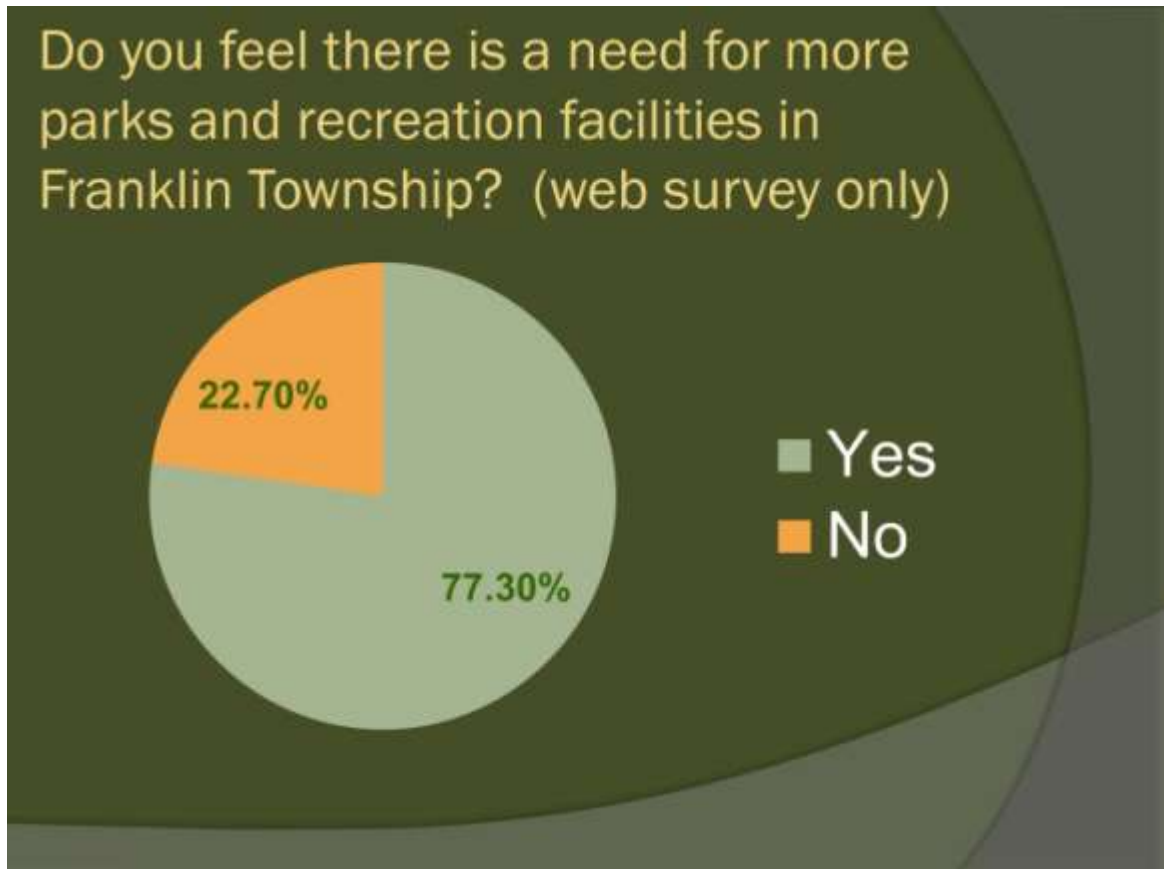
Households that have participated in recreation programs over the past 12 months were asked to rate the quality of the programs they have participated in. The following summarizes key findings:

- Of the 31% of households that have participated in recreation programs over the past 12 months, 32% rated the programs as either excellent or good (54%). In addition, 12% of households rated the recreation programs as fair and only 2% rated them as poor



9. Need for More Parks

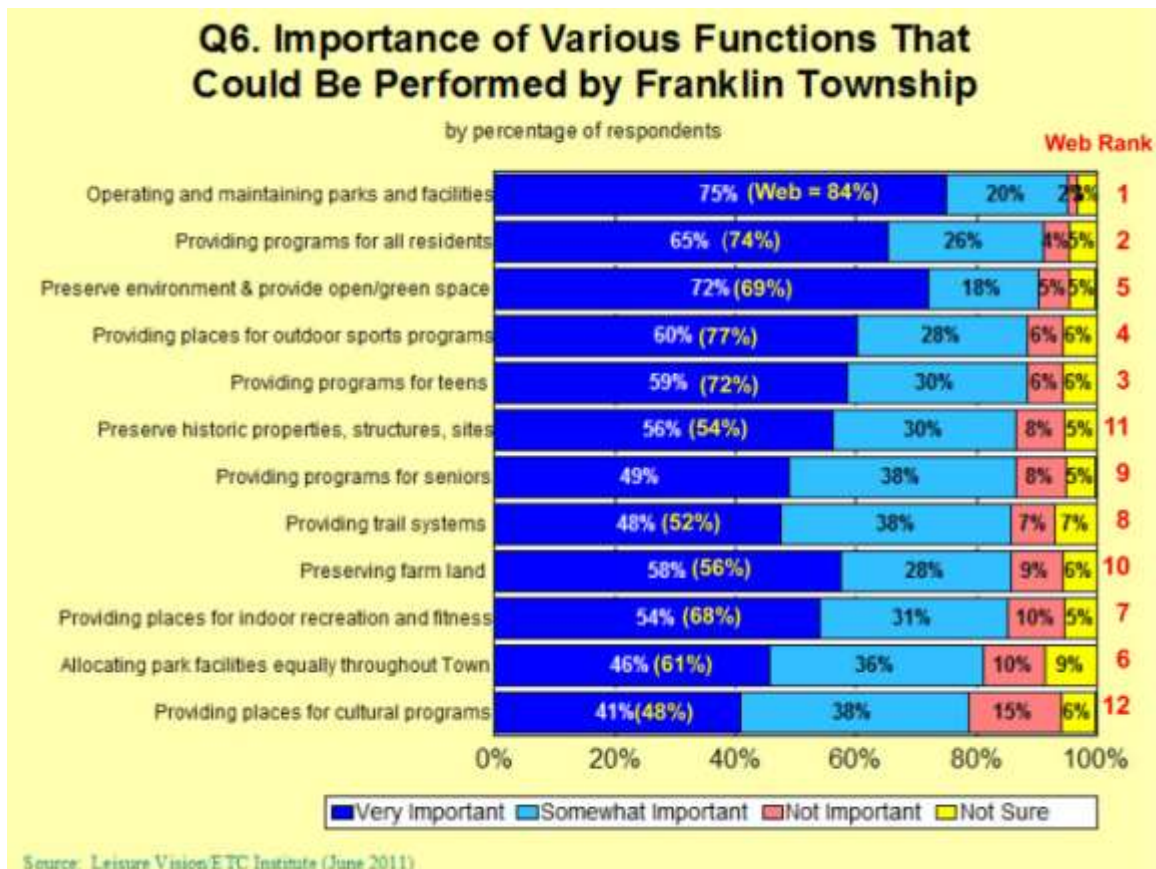
The web survey included a question whether the household felt there is a need for more parks and recreation facilities. A total of 77.3% indicated “yes” which is very strong.



10. Importance of Various Functions That Could Be Performed by Franklin Township

From a list of 12 functions that could be performed by Franklin Township, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each function. The following summarizes key findings:

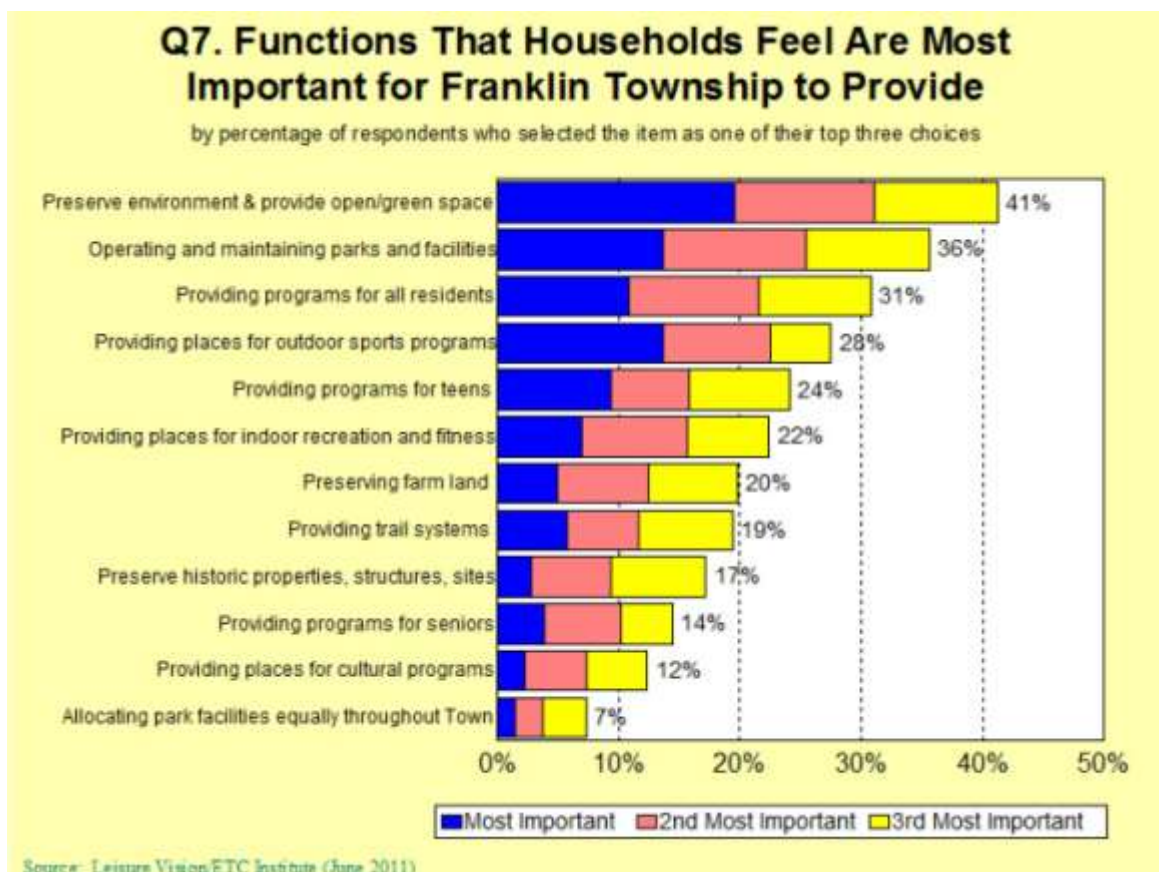
- The functions that the highest percentage of respondents rated as very important or somewhat important are: Operating and maintaining parks and facilities (95%), providing programs for all residents (91%), preserve environment and provide open/green space (90%), providing places for outdoor sports programs (88%), and providing programs for teens (89%).



11. Most Important Functions to Provide

From a list of 12 functions that could be performed by Franklin Township, respondents were asked to select the three functions they think should be most important for Franklin Township to provide. The following summarizes key findings:

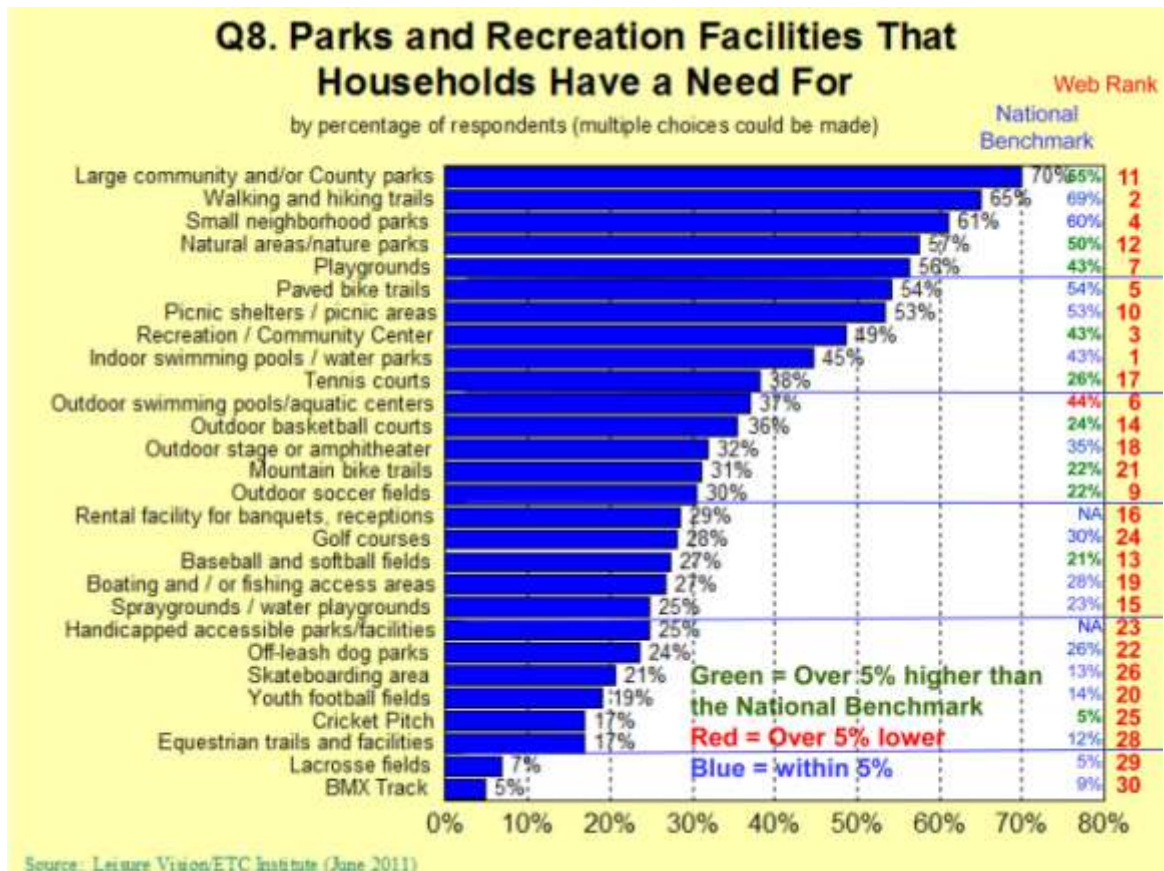
- Based on the sum of their top three choices, the functions that respondents think are most important for Franklin Township to provide are: preserve environment and provide open/green space (41%), operating and maintaining parks and facilities (36%), and providing programs for all residents (31%). It should also be noted that preserving the environment and providing open/green space had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the function their household thinks is most important for Franklin Township to provide.



12. Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities

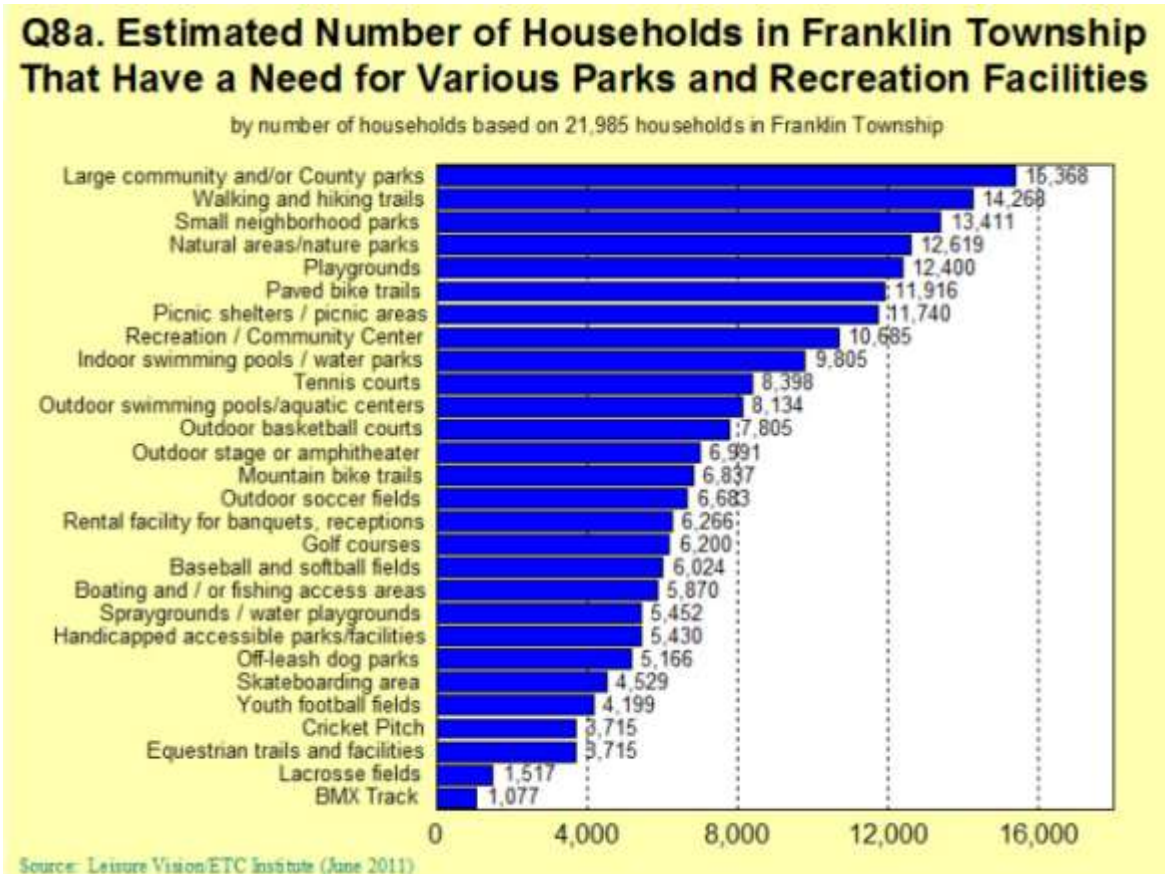
From a list of 28 options, respondents were asked to indicate the parks recreation facilities their households have a need for. The following summarizes key findings:

- The recreation facilities respondents said they have the greatest need for are: large community and/or County parks (70%), walking and hiking trails (65%), and small neighborhood parks (61%).



13. Need For Parks and Recreation Facilities in Franklin Township

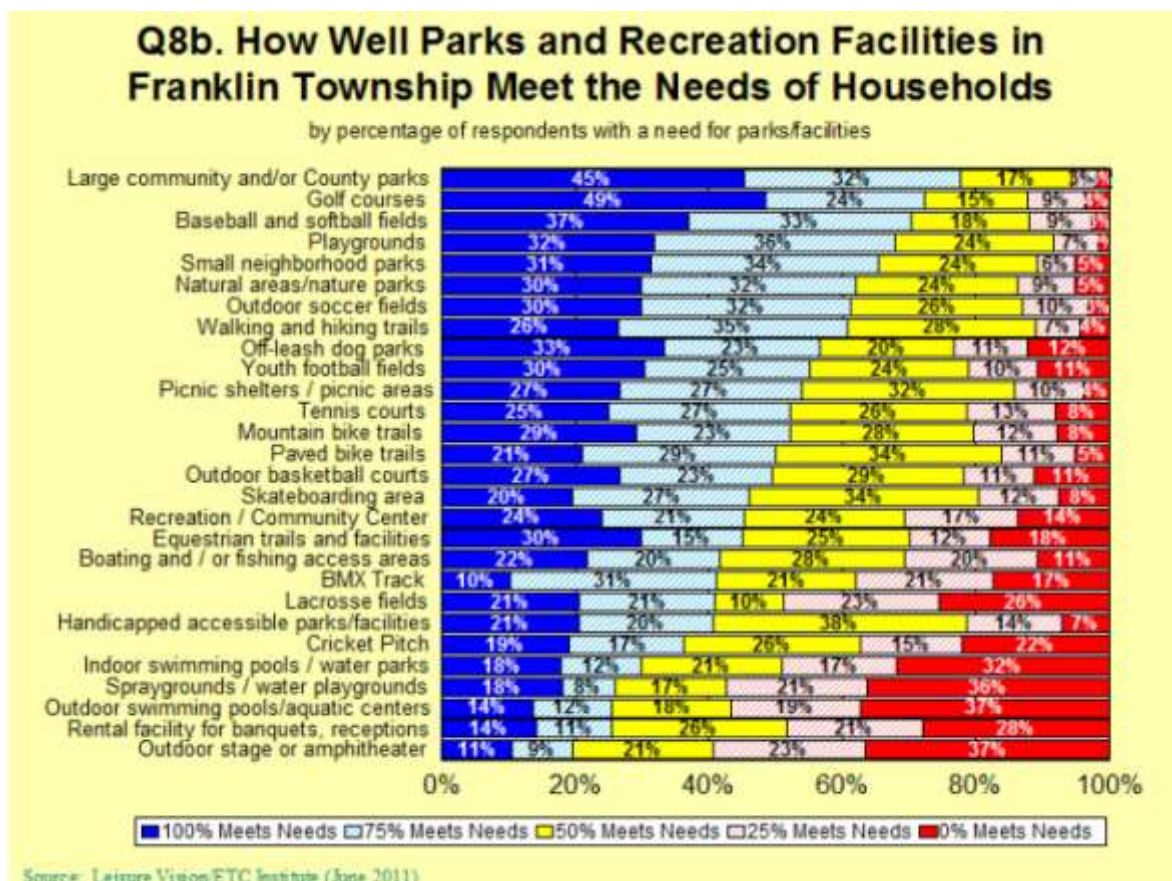
From a list of 28 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones their household has a need for. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Franklin Township that have a need for various parks and recreation facilities, based on 21,985 households in the Township.



14. How Well Parks and Recreation Facilities Meet Needs

From a list of 28 parks and recreation facilities, households that have a need for parks/facilities were asked to indicate how well these types of parks/facilities in Franklin Township meet their needs. The following summarizes key findings:

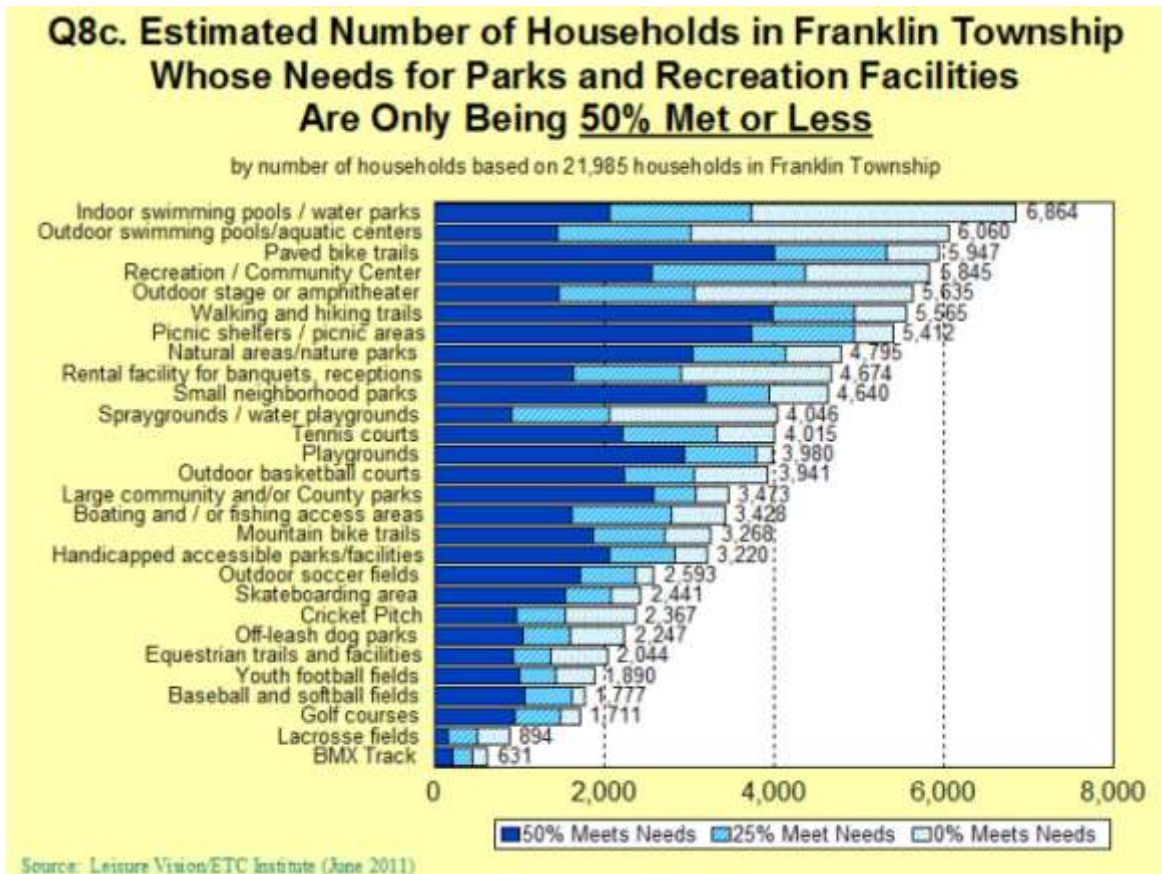
- For all 28 parks and facilities, less than 50% of respondents indicated that the park/facility completely meets the needs of their household.





15. Franklin Township Households with Facility Needs Being 50% Met or Less

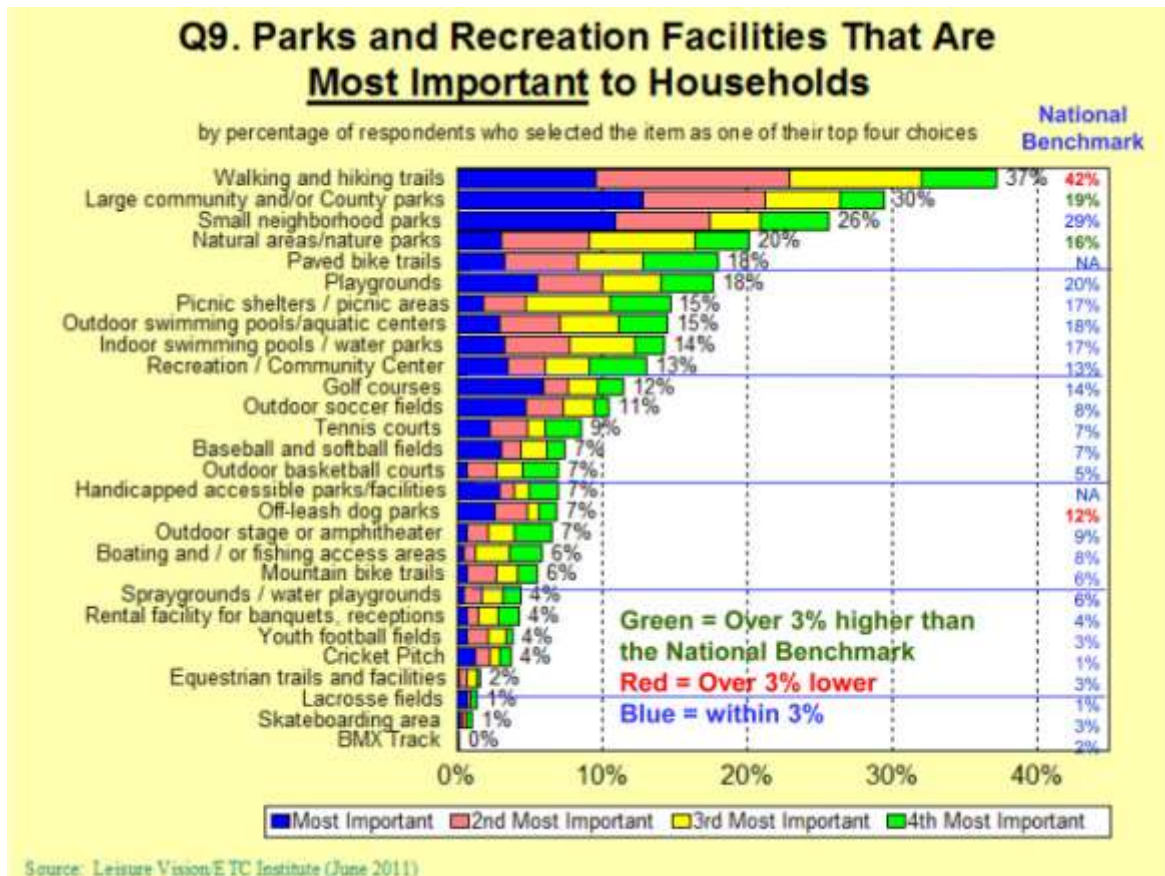
From a list of 28 parks and recreation facilities, households that have a need for parks/facilities were asked to indicate how well these types of parks/facilities in Franklin Township meet their needs. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Franklin Township whose needs for parks/facilities are only being 50% met or less, based on 21,985 households in the Township.



16. Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities

From a list of 28 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to select the four parks/facilities that are most important to their household. The following summarizes key findings:

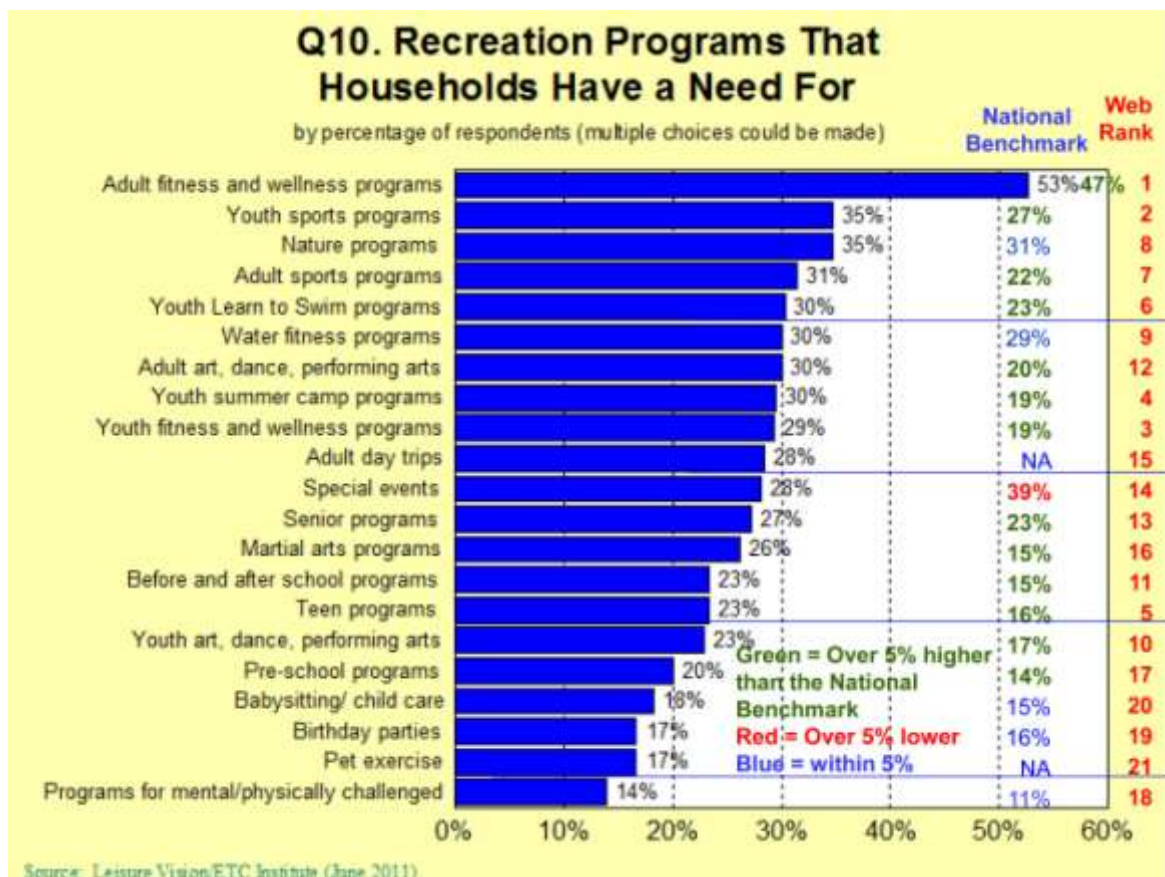
- Based on the sum of their top four choices, the parks and facilities that are most important to households are: walking and hiking trails (37%), large community and/or County parks (30%), small neighborhood parks (26%), natural areas/nature parks (20%), and paved bike trails (18%). It should also be noted that large community and/or County parks had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the park/facility that is most important to their household.



17. Need for Recreation Programs

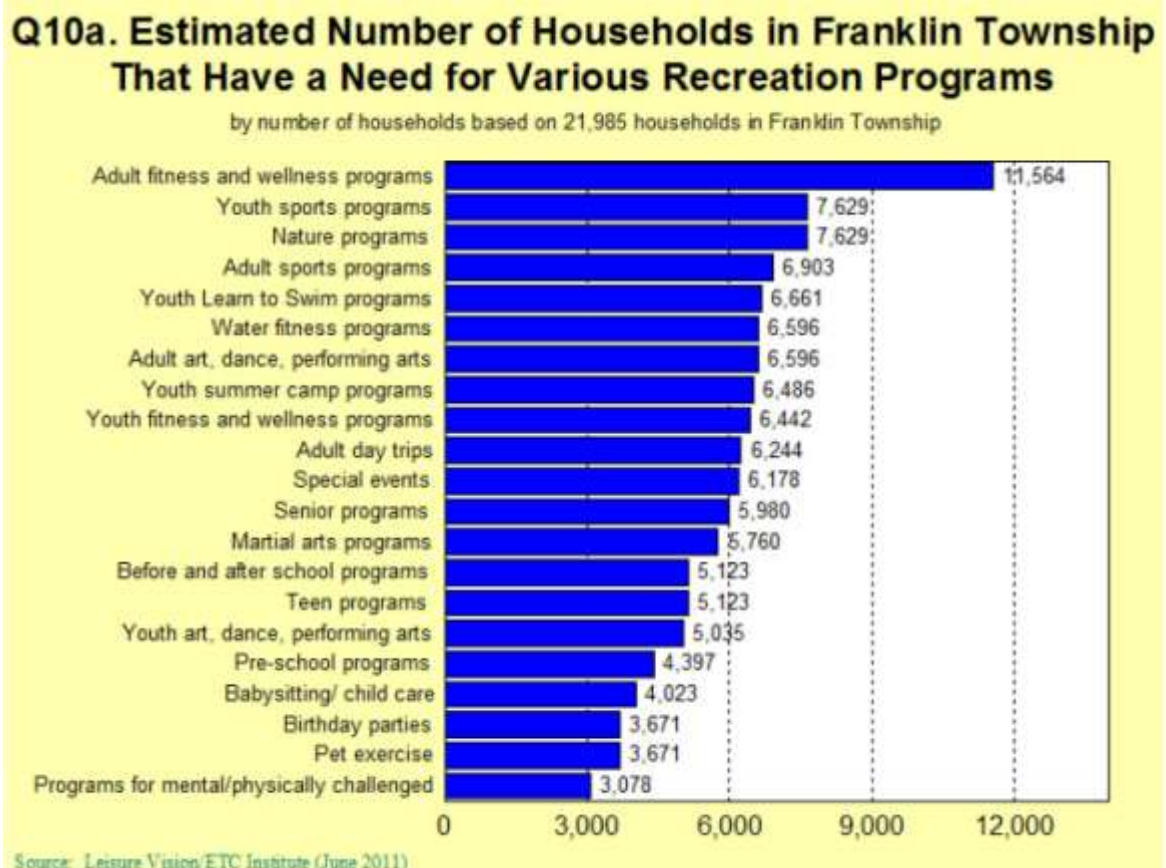
From a list of 21 recreation programs, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones their household has a need. The following summarizes key findings:

- The recreation programs that the highest percentage of households that have a need for are: adult fitness and wellness programs (53%), youth sports programs (35%), nature programs (35%), and adult sports programs (31%).



18. Need for Recreation Programs in Franklin Township

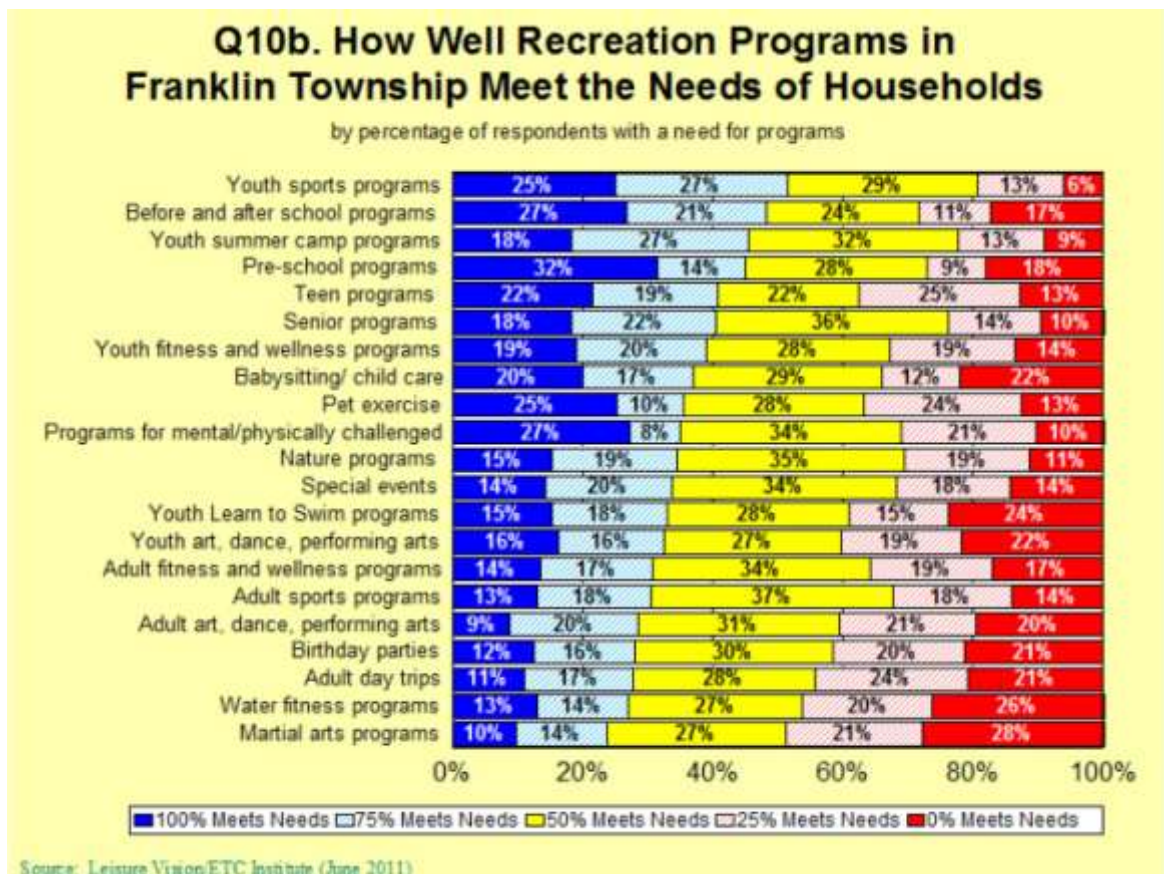
From a list of 21 recreation programs, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones their household has a need. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Franklin Township that have a need for recreation programs, based on 21,985 households in the Township.



19. How Well Recreation Programs Meet Needs

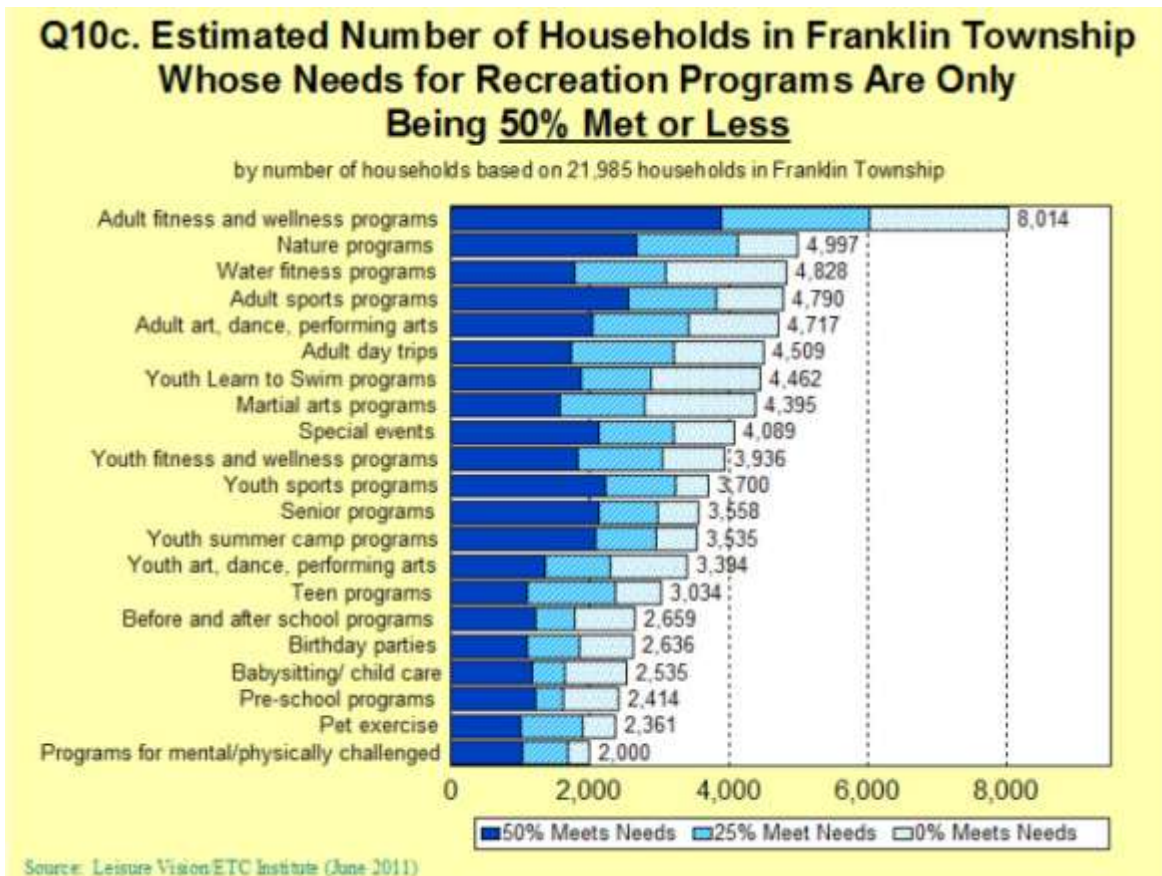
From a list of 21 recreation programs, households that have a need for programs were asked to indicate how well these types of programs in Franklin Township meet their needs. The following summarizes key findings:

- For all 21 programs, less than 32% of respondents indicated that the program completely meets the needs of their household.



20. Franklin Township Households with Program Needs Being 50% Met or Less

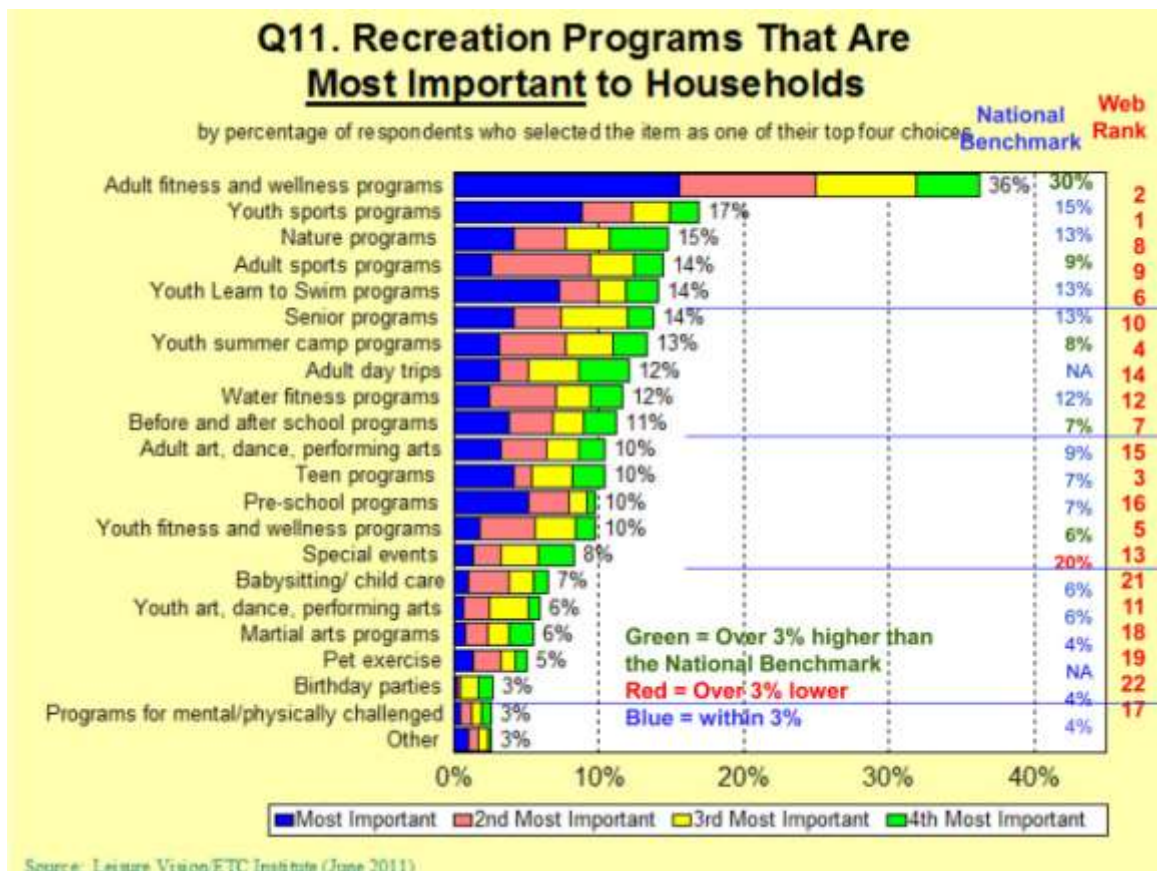
From a list of 21 recreation programs, households that have a need for programs were asked to indicate how well these types of programs in Franklin Township meet their needs. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Franklin Township whose needs for programs are only being 50% met or less, based on 21,985 households in the Township.



21. Most Important Recreation Programs

From a list of 21 recreation programs, respondents were asked to select the four that are most important to their household. The following summarizes key findings:

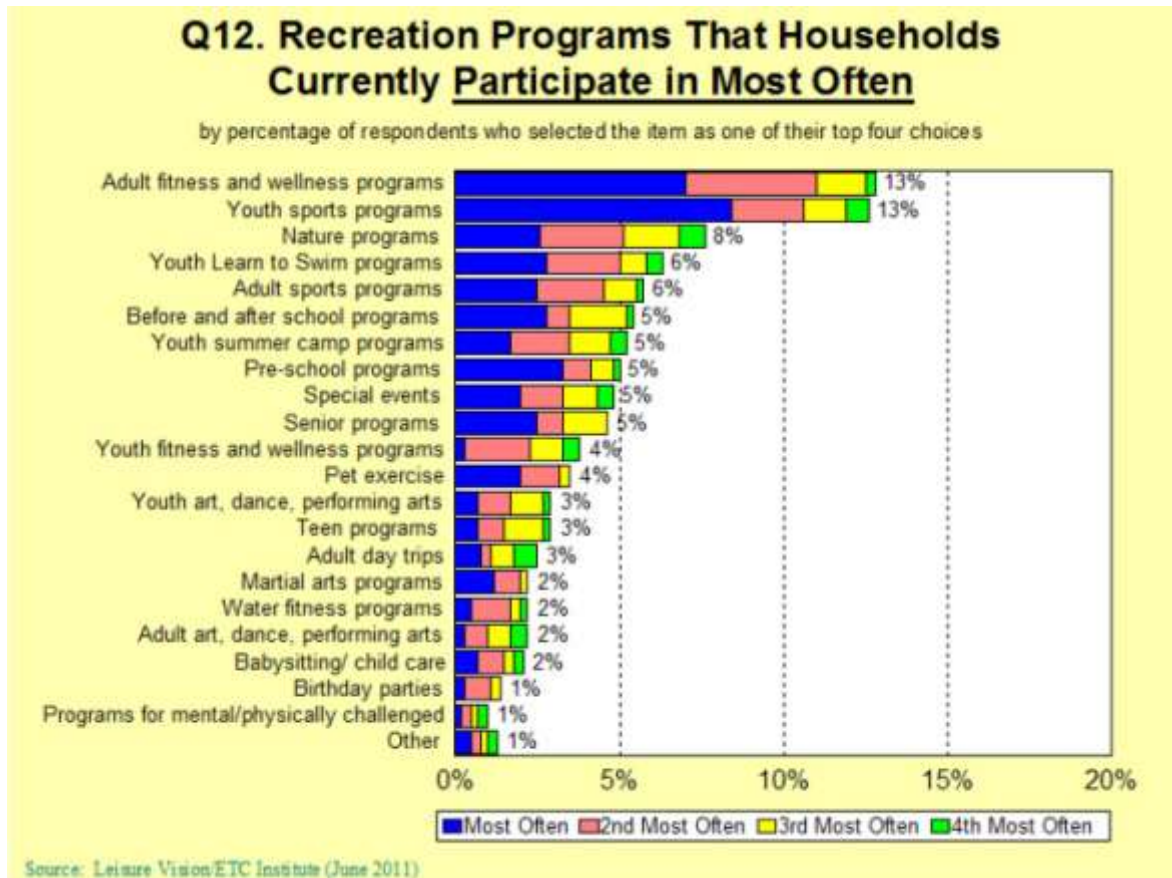
- Based on the sum of their top four choices, the recreation programs that are most important to households are: adult fitness and wellness programs (36%), youth sports programs (17%), and nature programs (15%). It should also be noted that adult fitness and wellness programs had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the program that is most important to their household.



22. Recreation Programs Currently Participated in Most Often

From a list of 21 recreation programs, respondents were asked to select the four that their household currently participates in most often. The following summarizes key findings:

- Based on the sum of their top four choices, the programs that households currently participate in most often are: adult fitness and wellness programs (13%), youth sports programs (13%), and nature programs (8%). It should also be noted that youth sports programs had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the program their household participates in most often.

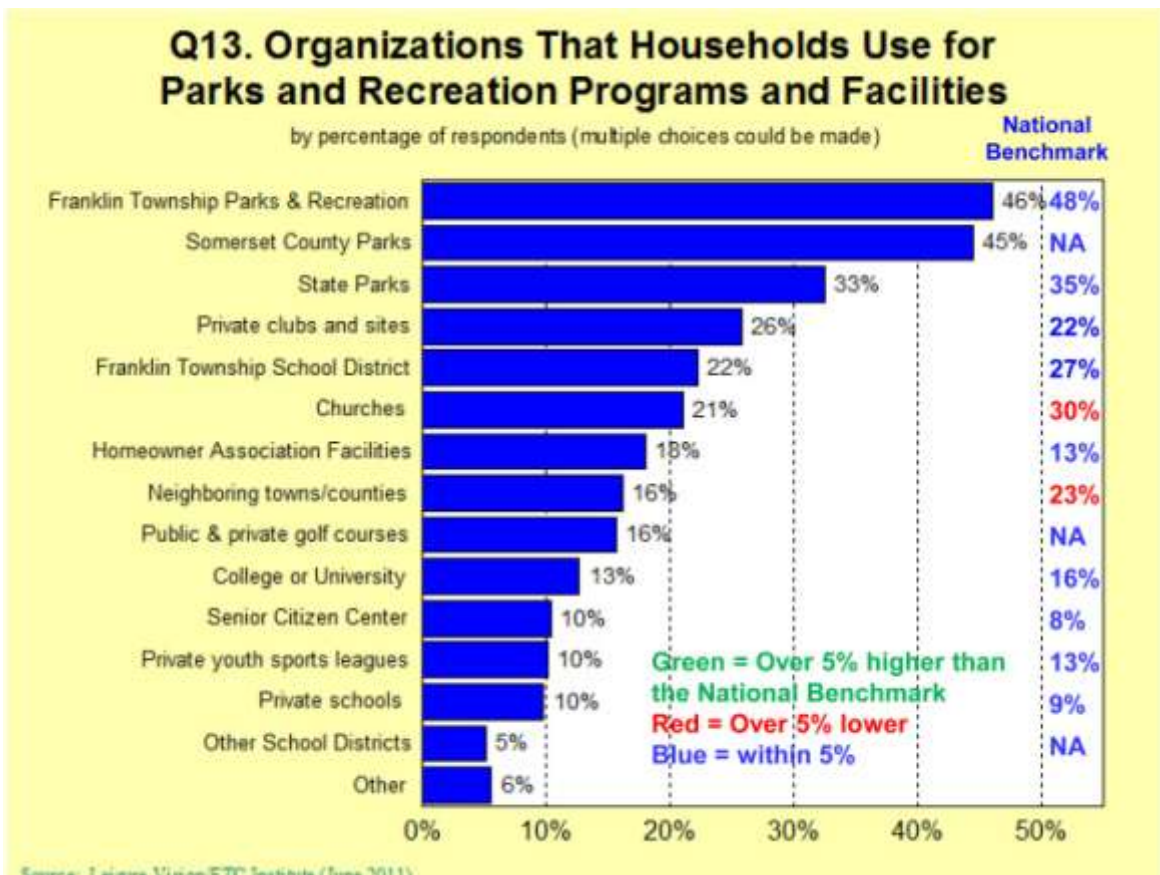




23. Organizations Used for Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities

From a list of 15 options, respondents were asked to indicate all of the organizations their household uses for parks and recreation programs and facilities. The following summarizes key findings:

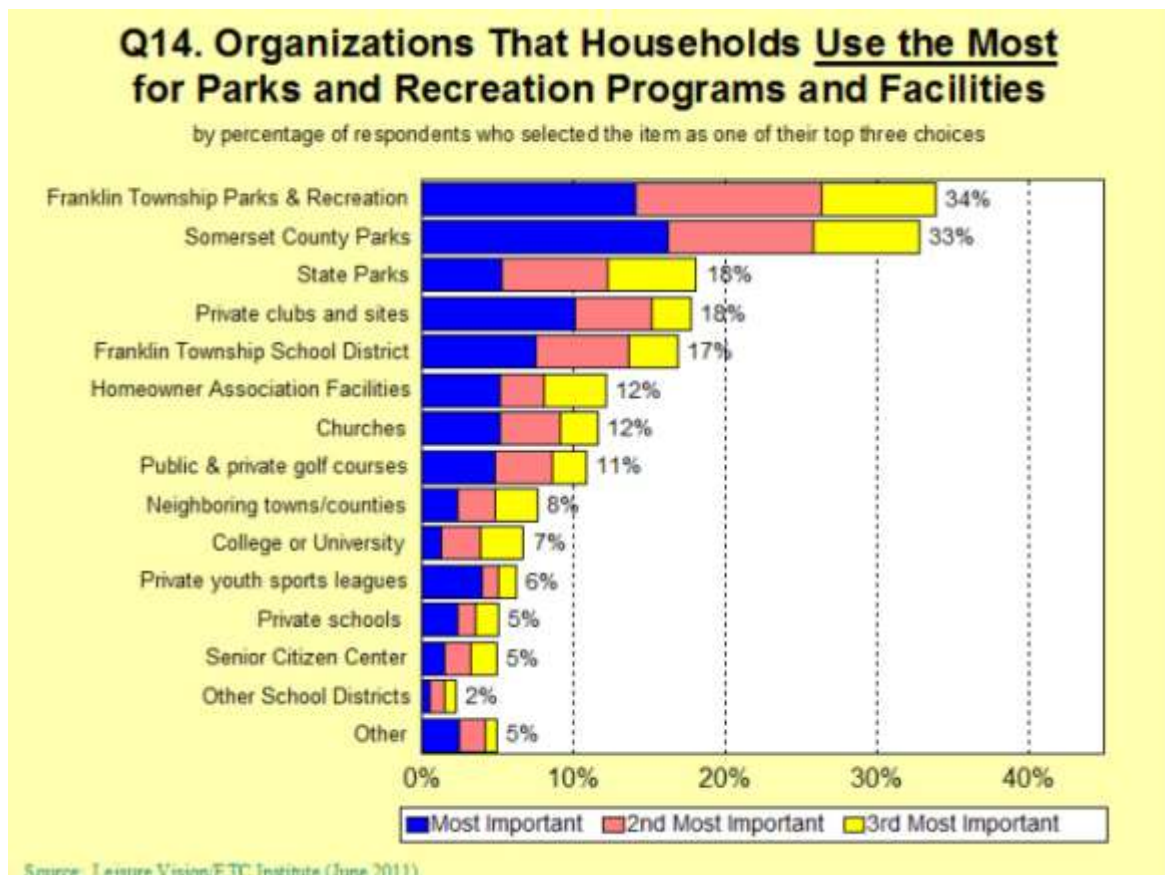
- The organizations used by the highest percentage of households for parks and recreation programs and facilities are: Franklin Township Parks and Recreation (46%), Somerset County Parks (45%), State Parks (33%), and Private clubs and sites (26%).



24. Organizations Used the Most for Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities

From a list of 15 options, respondents were asked to select the three organizations their household uses the most for parks and recreation programs and facilities. The following summarizes key findings:

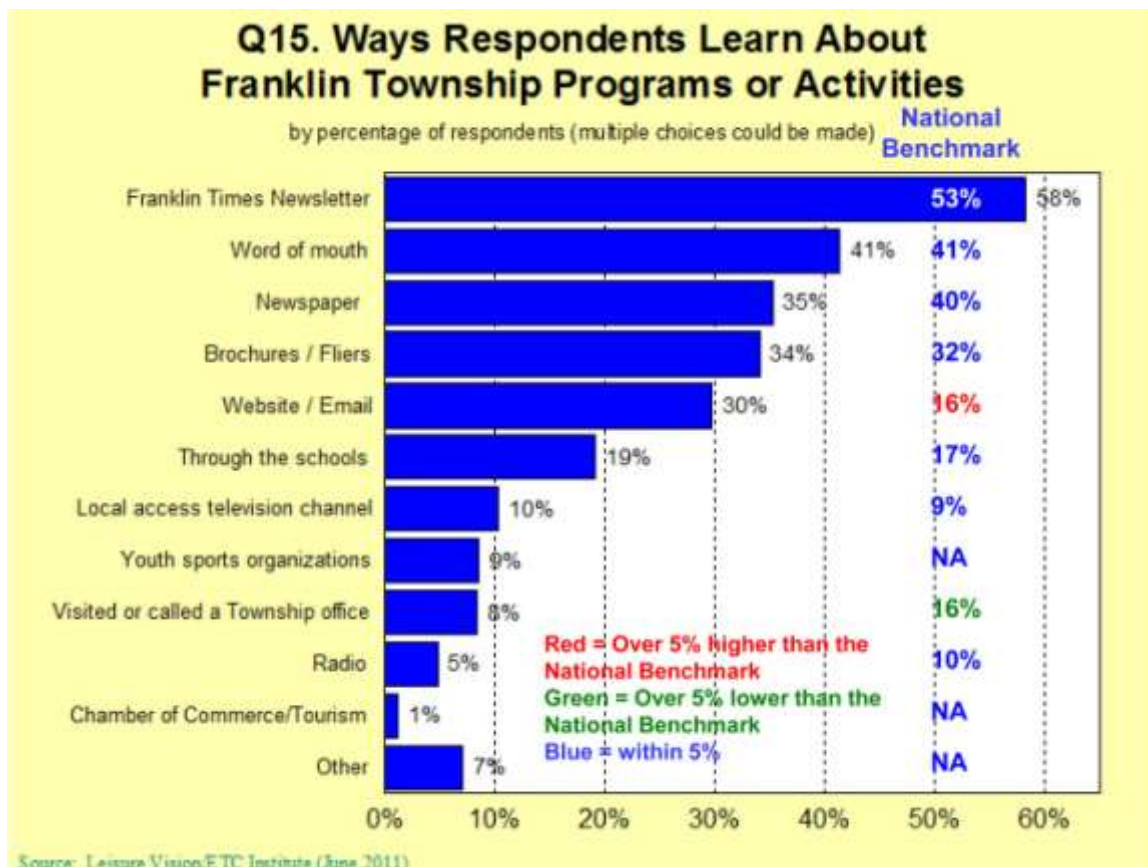
- Based on the sum of their top three choices, the organizations that households use the most for parks and recreation programs and facilities are: Franklin Township Parks and Recreation (34%), Somerset County Parks (33%), State Parks (18%), and private clubs and sites (18%). It should also be noted that Somerset County Parks had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the organization their household uses the most for parks and recreation programs and facilities.



25. Ways Respondents Learn About Recreation Programs and Activities

From a list of 12 options, respondents were asked to indicate all the ways they learn about recreation programs and activities. The following summarizes key findings:

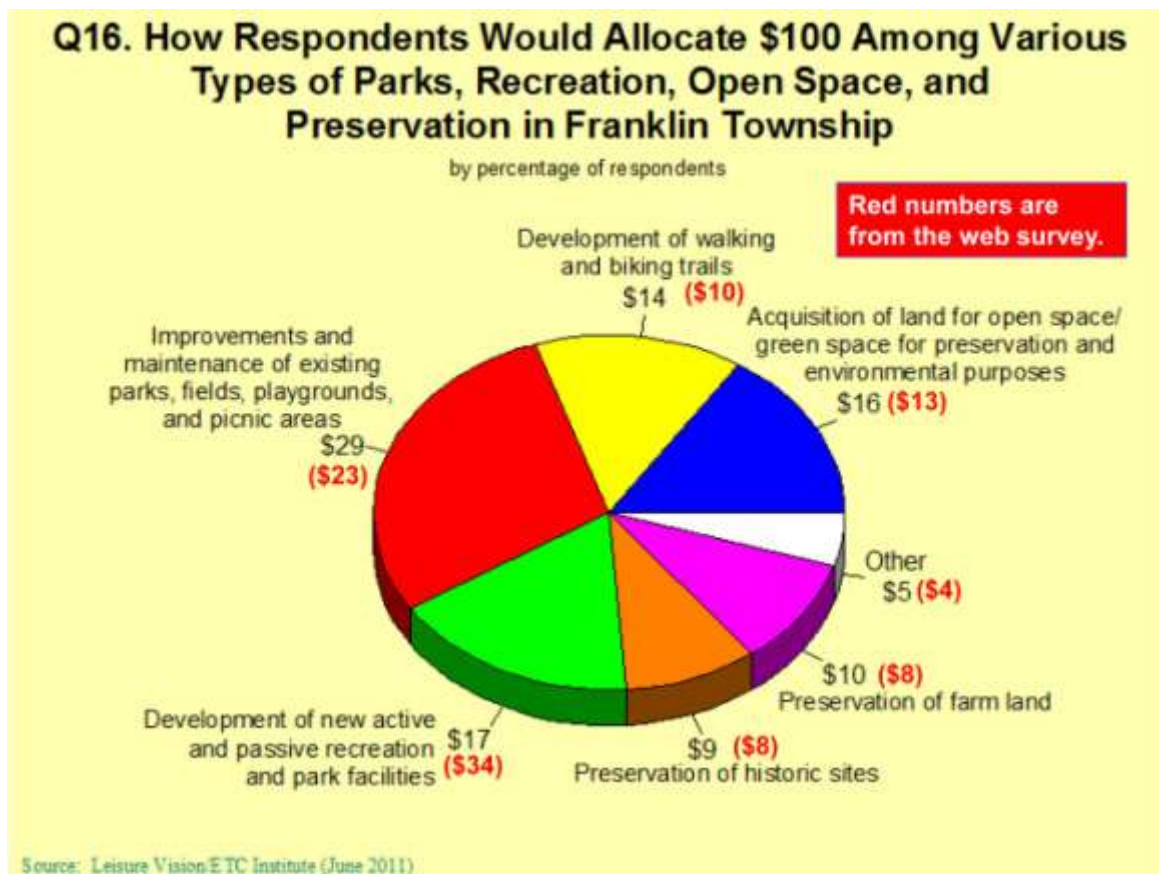
- The Franklin Times Newsletter (53%) and word of mouth (41%) are the most frequently mentioned ways respondents learn about recreation programs and activities.



26. Allocation of \$100 Among Parks & Recreation Facilities in Franklin Township

Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 among various types of parks and recreation facilities in Franklin Township. The following summarizes key findings:

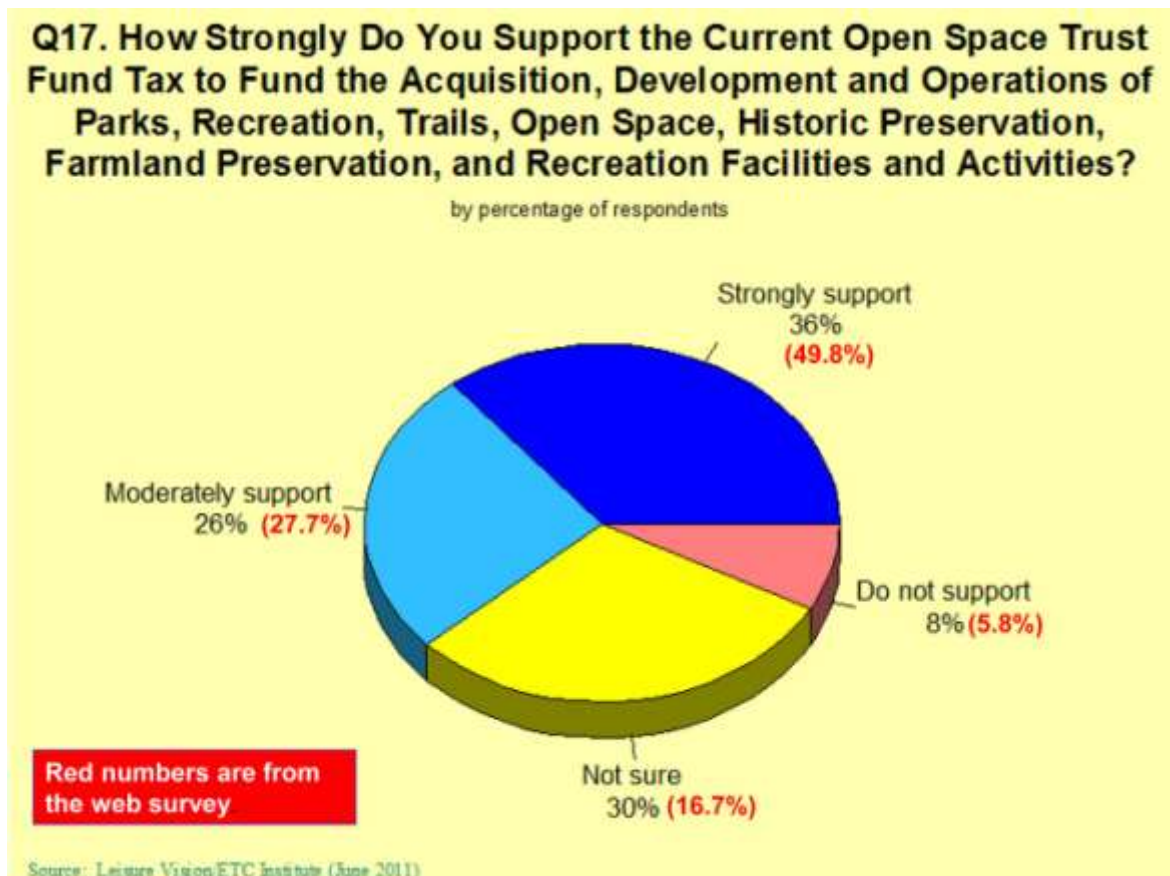
- Improvements/maintenance of existing parks, playgrounds and picnic areas (\$29) is the type of parks and recreation facility that respondents would allocate the most money. The remaining \$71 was allocated as follows: development of new active and passive recreation and park facilities (\$17), acquisition of land for open space/green space for preservation and environmental purposes (\$16), development of walking and biking trails (\$14), preservation of farm land (\$10), preservation of historic sites (\$9), and “other” (\$5).



27. Level of Support for a Recreation Tax to Fund Parks and Recreation

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for a recreation tax to fund the development and operations of the types of parks, recreation, trails, programming and facilities that are most important to their household. The following summarizes key findings:

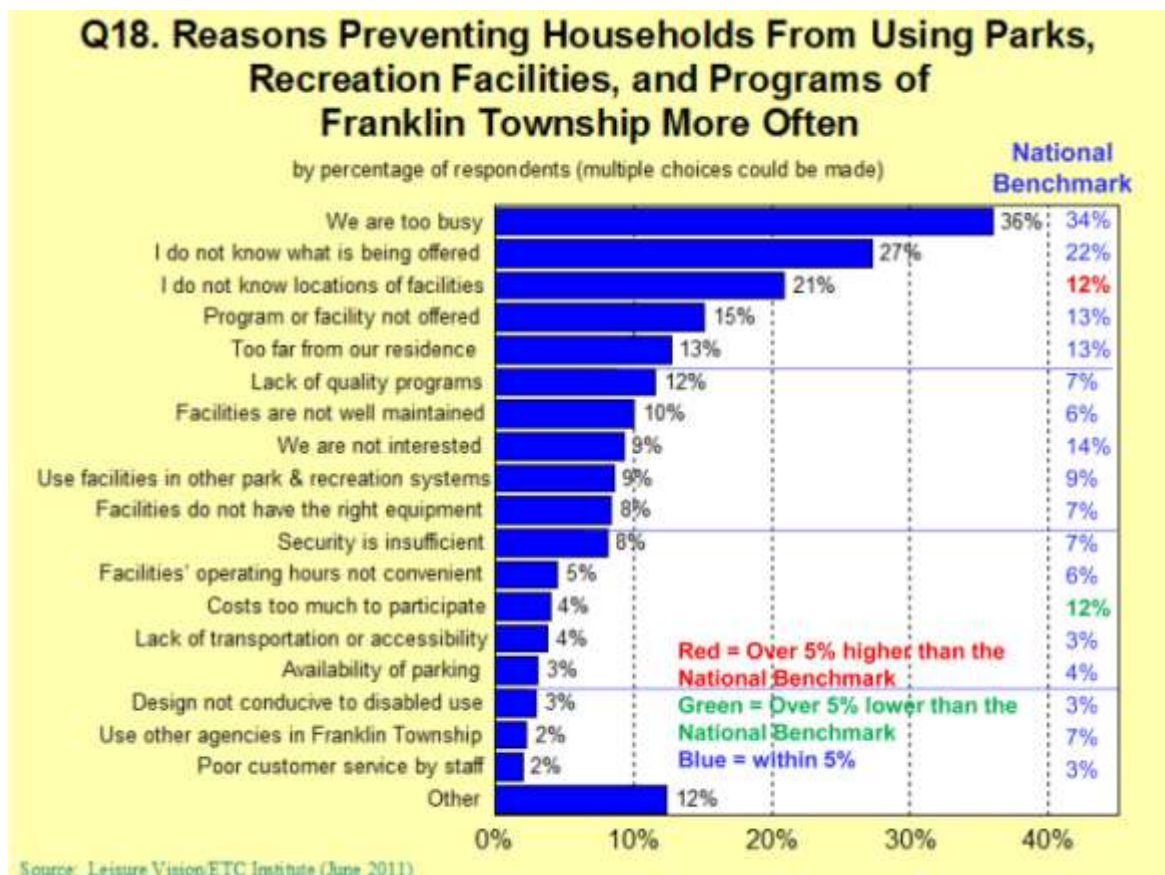
- Thirty percent (30%) of households are not sure if they would support a recreation tax to fund the development and operations of the types of parks, recreation, trails, programming and facilities that are most important to their household. Eight percent (8%) of households would not support the recreation tax, and 62% of households either strongly support or moderately support the recreation tax.



28. Reasons Preventing Households From Using Parks, Recreation Facilities and Programs More Often

From a list of 19 options, respondents were asked to indicate all the reasons preventing their household from using parks, recreation facilities and programs of Franklin Township more often. The following summarizes key findings:

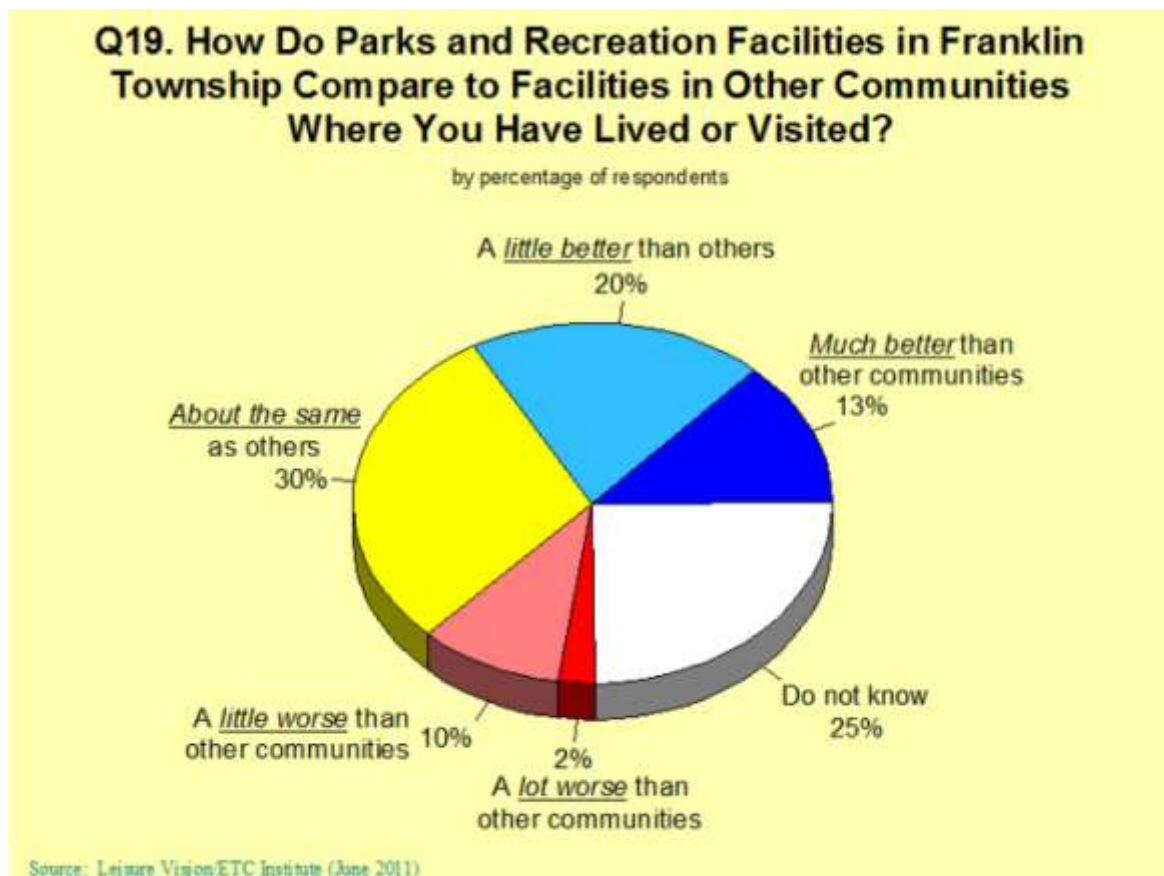
- The most frequently mentioned reasons preventing households from using parks, recreation facilities and programs more often are: “we are too busy” (36%), “I do not know what is being offered” (27%), and “I do not know locations of facilities” (21%).



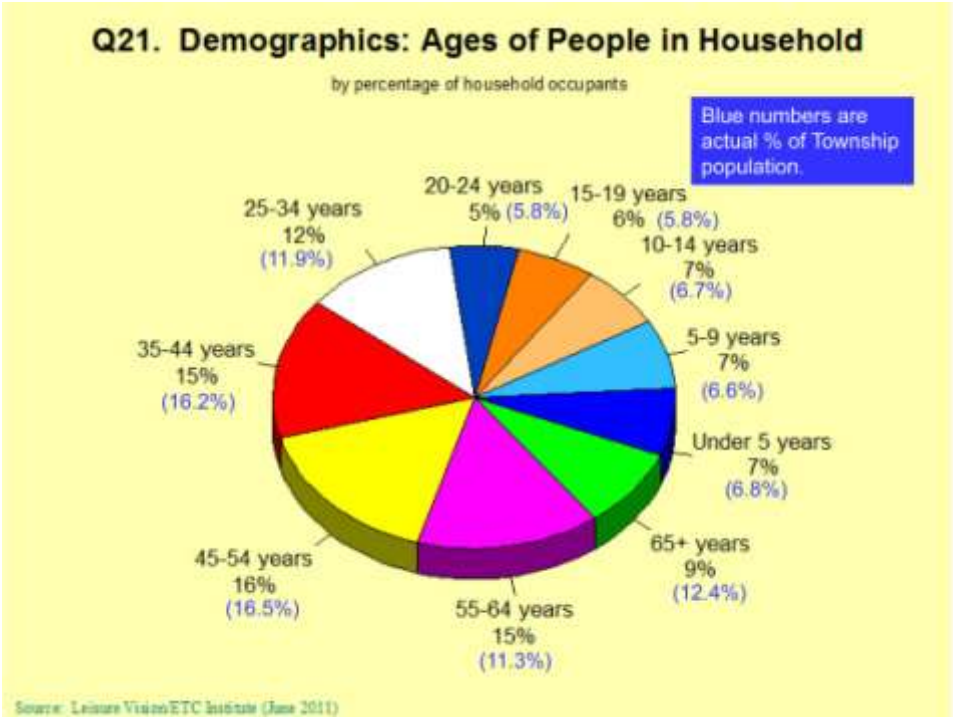
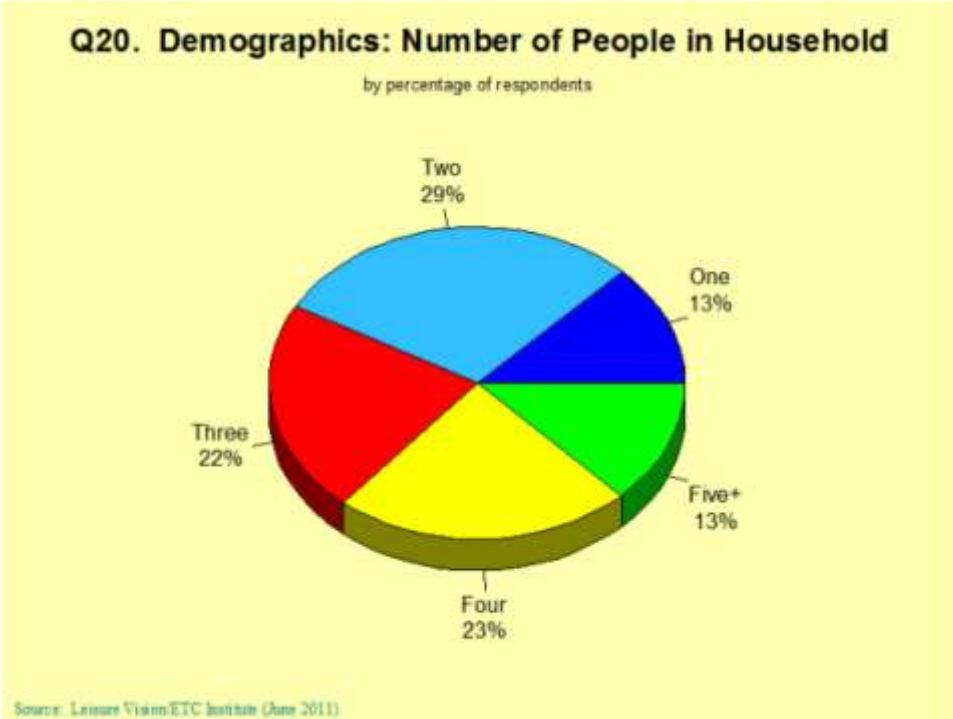
29. Parks and Recreation Facilities in Franklin Township Compared to Other Communities

Respondents were asked to indicate how they felt Franklin Township's parks and recreation facilities compared to other communities where they live, or have visited. The following summarizes key findings:

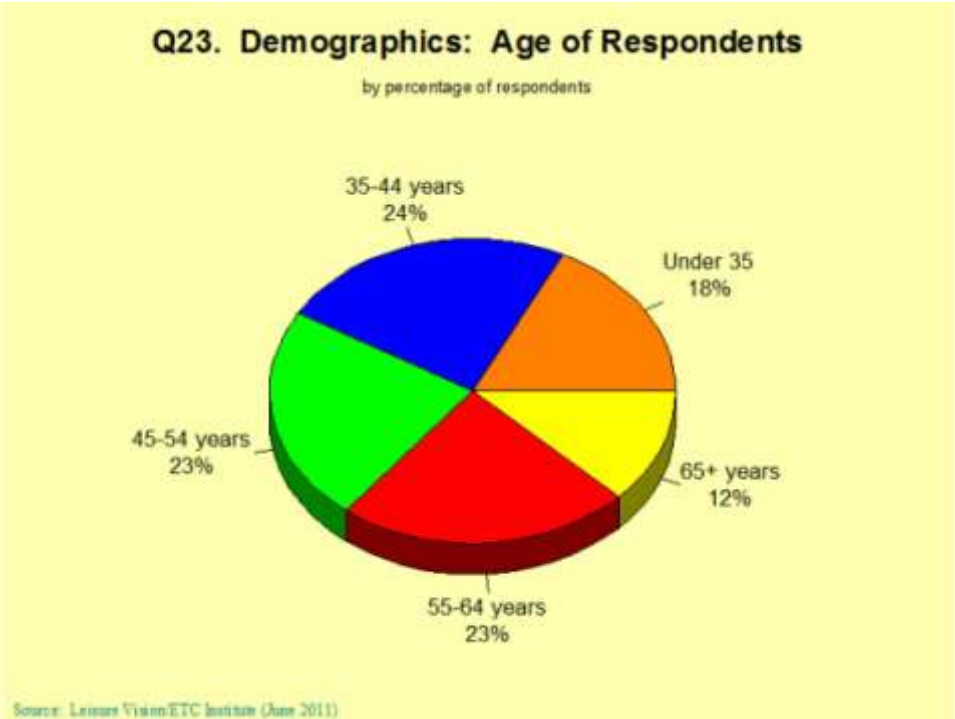
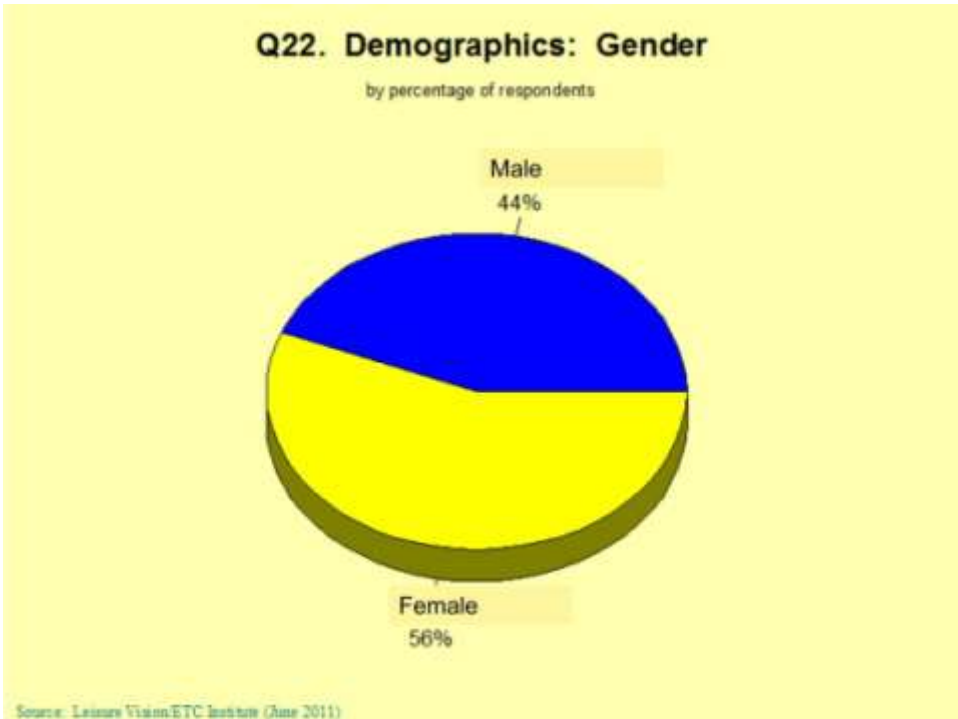
- Thirty percent (30%) of respondents indicated they thought Franklin Township's parks and recreations were about the same as facilities in other communities. The second largest percentage of respondents answered, did not know (25%). The remainder of responses was as follows: a little better than others (20%), much better than other communities (13%), a little worse than other communities (10%), and a lot worse than other communities (2%).



30. Demographics







### 31. Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix

The Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix is a tool for assessing the priority that should be placed on parks and recreation facilities and recreation programs in Franklin Township. Each of the facilities and programs that were assessed on the mail/phone survey were placed in one of the following four quadrants as shown on Figures 16 and 17 (based on responses to questions 8c and 9 for facilities and 10c and 11 for programs):

Top Priorities (higher unmet need and higher importance). Items in this quadrant should be given the highest priority for improvement. Respondents placed a high level of importance on these items, and the unmet need rating is high. Improvements to items in this quadrant will have positive benefits for the highest number of Franklin Township residents.

Opportunities for Improvement (higher unmet need and lower importance). Respondents placed a lower level of importance on these items, but the unmet need rating is relatively high. Items in this quadrant should be given secondary priority for improvement.

Special Needs (lower unmet need and higher importance). This quadrant shows where improvements may be needed to serve the needs of specialized populations. Respondents placed a high level of importance on these items, but the unmet need rating is relatively low.

Less Important (lower unmet need and lower importance). Items in this quadrant should receive the lowest priority for improvement. Respondents placed a lower level of importance on these items, and the unmet need rating is relatively low.

This analysis was not performed for the web survey because these questions were not included in the shorter web survey.

Figure 16: Needs Assessment Matrix for Parks and Recreation Facilities

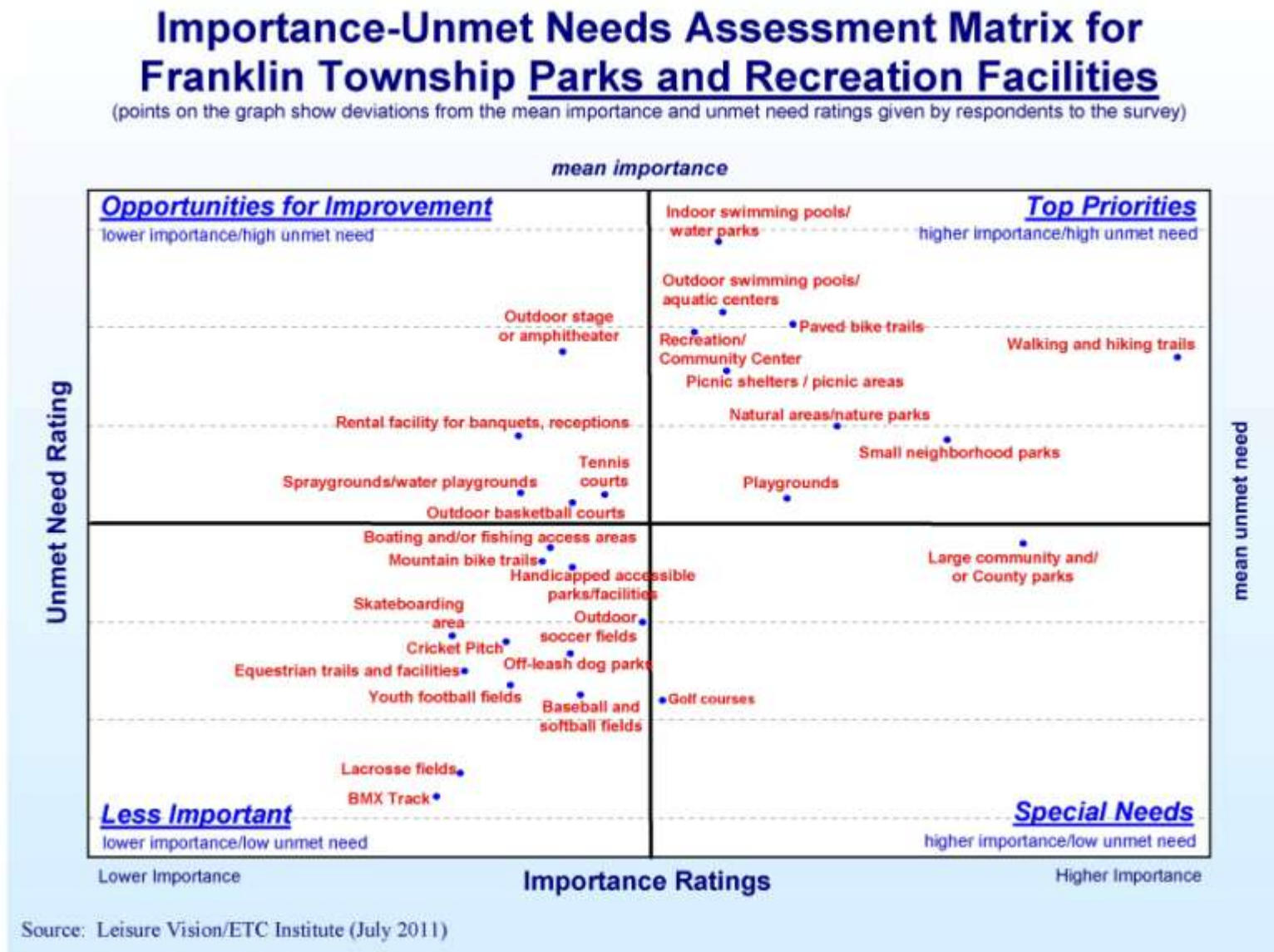
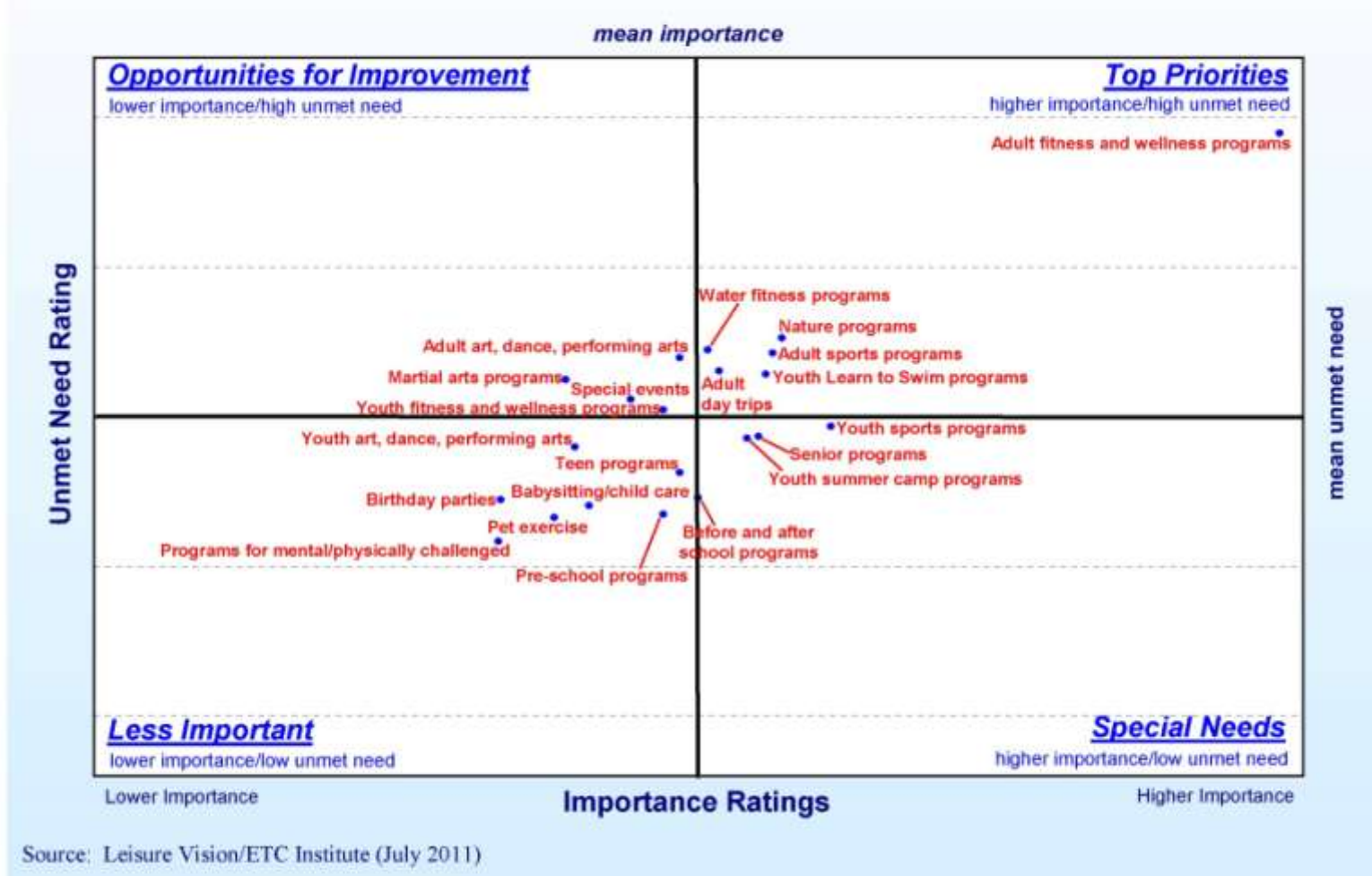


Figure 17: Needs Assessment Matrix for Recreation Programs

## Importance-Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for Franklin Township Recreation Programs

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey)



### J. Trends in Parks and Recreation

#### 1. The Aging Population

- a. Throughout the country, the average age of the population is increasing. The number of persons in the age group 65 and over is growing rapidly. Census data and state population data indicate that the percentage of Franklin Township's population age 65 and older was 10.2% in 1990, 11.4% in 2000 and is expected to increase to 13.7% in 2015. The numbers continually rise as the population increases. As indicated earlier in Table 6, the median age will rise from 33.2 in 1990 to 39.3 in 2015. The relative health of these individuals is better than ever before and the activities they desire are more active than in the past. The days of the old senior citizens centers where they play cards and do more sedentary activities is being replaced by incorporation into larger, more active, community and recreation centers where individuals participate in fitness programs, walking, cardiovascular exercises, aerobics, and many other more active pursuits.
- b. This trend encourages parks and recreation agencies to invest more in activities, programs, and facilities for the older population. This graying of America also generates demand for more paved walking trails, fishing areas, gardens, cultural and nature education, as well as other activities that are in demand for multiple age groups.

#### 2. Family Oriented Aquatic Facilities

- a. The older rectangle and L-shaped swimming pools had a very limited appeal. The desire to have 3 ½' depths of water for flip turns, or competition swimming, dictated a deeper water depth of the pool resulting in a lack of shallow water for younger children. Younger children were relegated to a "baby" pool, which really only appeals to tots, leaving the 4-10 year olds with no desire to visit the swimming pools.
- b. The newer family aquatic centers are geared toward the entire family with zero depth access, shallow water, interactive water spray activities, along with the traditional competition lanes and diving boards. Newer aquatic facilities are also incorporating lazy rivers, which are popular with people of all ages. The newer facilities also provide large water slides. These elements, along with providing shade structures, larger grass beach areas, and quality concessions, have resulted in a complete turnaround in the operating costs for aquatic facilities. Whereas the older pools were a drain on the budget, the newer facilities are able to generate funds for the operations cost and some have even

shown a surplus, which has been used to pay off some of the debt service for the capital construction. Where older pools have been renovated to include the newer features, communities have seen as much as a 200% increase in attendance. This demand provides an opportunity for charging higher fees which may result in a greater profit margin.

- c. Another new concept that is sweeping the country is the development of spraygrounds. These have replaced the wading pools at the aquatic facilities and are also developed as freestanding wet playgrounds in other park areas. Spraygrounds have several benefits in that, in most instances, they still recirculate the water, but because there is no standing water, there is no need for lifeguards. Therefore, the operation costs are considerably lower than for a swimming facility. Communities which have had several smaller neighborhood wading pools, have replaced them with spraygrounds to reduce operation costs while increasing interest and attendance.

### 3. Indoor Family Activity Centers

- a. The typical recreation center that included gymnasium space, locker rooms and a few other attractions have been replaced by much larger, multi-generational facilities that are described later in this text.
- b. The newer facilities have a much stronger emphasis on fitness with aerobics rooms, free weights, exercise machines, cardiovascular areas, walking tracks, indoor swimming pools for both family oriented and lap swimming, lounges, concessions, and climbing walls, along with the traditional basketball and volleyball gymnasiums. These facilities may also include multipurpose rooms, which are used for a wide variety of indoor programming, such as arts and crafts, dance classes, and other community education programs. These facilities are sometimes developed with a partnership such as a YMCA or health provider. A health provider partner may add physical therapy functions that complement the recreation center facilities such as a warm water therapy pool and additional fitness equipment.

### 4. Trail Linkages and Linear Parks

This trend has been ongoing for a long time, and is still very important in nearly every community where surveys have been conducted. Communities that have extensive trail systems still have a strong desire to continually connect and link the trails to neighborhoods, schools, shopping areas, and other community facilities. These communities are typically very livable communities with a high quality of life.

### 5. Revenue Generating Facilities

With the advent of tightened budgets throughout the country, facilities that generate revenue have become increasingly popular because of their ability to offset some of the operating costs. Most notably, the increased use of concessions in parks and at other locations has improved the ability of the public sector to raise money. Multi-field complexes, in addition to miniature golf courses, carousels, paddleboats and canoe rentals, and other creative applications have enhanced the community experience while lessening the tax burden.

### 6. Dog Parks

The construction of dog parks is an ongoing trend that has been sweeping the country in the last five to ten years. The development of fence enclosed areas where dogs can run leash free can be a positive addition to a community. Dog parks have proven to be good for improving the social interaction skills of dogs and have also been a very good social attraction for the dog owners. Quality dog parks need well-conceived planning. They also need a fairly extensive operating budget that includes staff time for maintenance and upkeep.

### 7. Extreme Parks

a. Due partly to the growth of extreme sports shown on television, the pursuit of extreme sports activities, especially by teenagers, has increased by hundreds of percent. Nearly every community that does not have a skatepark has a very large contingent of teens and young adults that are strong advocates for skatepark development. Other types of active pursuits in this park type include BMX tracks, mountain bike trails, climbing walls, as well as the skateparks. These activities appeal to a demographic that has decided not to be part of the traditional parks and recreation programming activities.

b. The communities that have developed successful skateparks will entice dozens of teens to gather in the park. These parks can actually be construed as teen oriented parks and should be supplemented with other facilities, such as basketball courts, sand volleyball courts, and snack bars.

### 8. Fitness

We are reminded every day through the media that Americans are becoming less fit. There is a strong emphasis at the state to the federal levels to improve the fitness of individuals throughout the United States. Local park and recreation departments are building upon this message. They are probably the best organizations to make an impact in the overall

fitness of the community through programs, promotions, and facilities that are available to the residents to improve their health and fitness.

### 9. Tournament Facilities

- a. As mentioned in the revenue generation section, tournaments can be a revenue generator by exacting entrance fees and promoting concession sales. There is a trend to develop facilities that are of tournament level quality to attract better teams and better tournaments to the facilities. These high quality facilities offer a bonus for the local leagues and activities when not being used for tournaments. A balance does need to exist between local league use and use for tournaments.
- b. Facilities must be designed to accommodate tournaments with larger parking lots, arrangement of fields in a cluster such as a wagon wheel configuration for baseball and softball fields. There must be quality restroom facilities, concessions, shade and other amenities throughout the park that make it a desirable place to spend the day or a weekend.

### 10. Synthetic Turf Fields

Many school systems and municipalities are developing synthetic turf fields to meet the ever increasing demand for soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby and other athletic pursuits. These are higher cost initially, but the ability to play on the fields continuously without the need to water, fertilize, mow, stripe, etc. is a maintenance savings to the community. The fields can be developed to be flat and can accommodate substantial rains without damage to the surface. The fields are safer than overused grass fields. The main benefits of synthetic turf fields include:

- a. Lower long term operating costs per event
- b. Safer surfaces for athletes
- c. Ability to schedule significantly more events on the same area versus natural grass fields
- d. Ability to extend the season by allowing use earlier in spring and later in fall without damaging turf
- e. Less rain outs
- f. In communities with limited fields available, synthetic turf fields allow the maximum use on the same area
- g. No need for watering, mowing, fertilizing or striping



### 11. Universal Access

Many park systems are developing unique facilities, (especially playgrounds) that are designed to go well beyond the minimum requirement for the Americans with Disabilities Act. By creating an environment that is totally accessible to persons of all ages and abilities, park system administrators are setting the best example for other organizations to follow. In the case of playgrounds, this results in playgrounds with several ground level activities, multiple ramps providing access to the decks, and the use of poured-in-place rubber surfacing.

Several major facilities have developed trails utilizing paved, level surfaces that also have textured edging for the visually impaired. Fragrant plants and sensory gardens, interactive displays that allow a hands-on approach to education have also been developed to promote a better experience for special populations. While it may not be cost effective to develop this level of universal access at every playground facility, it is the practice of forward thinking recreation departments to install some destination facilities that are developed to this level.

Universal access applies to a lot more than playgrounds; it also applies to aquatic facilities, interpretive facilities, trails, access into buildings and access to all programs and facilities offered by the community.

### 12. Cultural Education

As the population of cities and counties becomes more diverse, there is a strong desire for more heritage programs. There has also been an increase in participation in many programs for the visual and performing arts. These programs are becoming more common as program offerings initiated by parks and recreation departments increase.

Cultural education covers a lot of ground. It encompasses all of the arts, such as visual and performing arts, as well as heritage recognition. Communities become stronger when its citizens better understand their cultural links to the community.

### 13. Nature Education

The success of environmental education centers throughout the country indicate that there is a strong desire and need to better educate the public, and especially children, in natural processes, resource management and similar nature education activities. These work well in conjunction with the school systems to supplement their science curriculum. This "environmental education" develops a strong base of support for the large expanses of open space and natural habitats that are owned by the county or municipality. Many park departments and commissions take an outreach approach by providing environmental curriculum to the schools in the form of nature center classes and

activities. This tactic provides a method for promoting more use and appreciation of the parks. This is also an opportunity for the county park systems and universities to work closely with the municipal parks and recreation departments to provide a level of programming that the municipalities could not perform on their own.

In Franklin Township, The Township owns the Bunker Hill Environmental Education Center, but the Schools are no longer using the facility for their educational purposes and the facility is not being used much.

14. Nationwide Sports Participation

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) conducts a survey every two years of 41,000 households throughout the United States. These surveys are used to generate a series of tables that identify trends in sports participation. The Nationwide Ten-Year History of Selected Sports Participation Table (Table 15) identifies the major activities that are surveyed through this study. The activities are listed by their rank order in the year 2010. For example, exercise/walking is the most participated activity at 95.8 million participants. This is followed by exercising with equipment at 55.3 million and swimming at 51.9 million and camping at 44.7 million. The table shows soccer, as one of the most common activities requested as part of the study, 20th on the list with 13.5 million participants. When combining baseball and softball, it increases to a total of 26.3 million. The table indicates that for the ten year period surveyed, baseball and soccer have shown fluctuation, but overall have remained at a steady figure.

Table 16 identifies the national trend in youth sports participation and indicates that youth baseball has reduced by 15.7% and soccer has reduced by 2.5% over the ten year period.

**Table 15: Nationwide Ten-Year History of Selected Sports Participation**

**Ten-Year History of Sports Participation**

*Participated more than once (in millions)*

*Seven (7) years of age and older*

	2010	2008	2006	2004	2002	2000
Exercise Walking	95.8	96.6	87.5	84.7	82.2	86.3
Exercising with Equipment	55.3	63.0	52.4	52.2	46.8	44.8
Swimming	51.9	63.5	56.5	53.4	53.1	60.7
Camping (vacation/overnite)	44.7	49.4	48.6	55.3	55.4	49.9
Bicycle Riding	39.8	44.7	35.6	40.3	39.7	43.1
Bowling	39.0	49.5	44.8	43.8	42.4	43.1
Aerobic Exercising	38.5	36.2	33.7	29.5	29.0	28.6
Hiking	37.7	38.0	31.0	28.3	27.2	24.3
Workout at Club	36.3	39.3	37.0	31.8	28.9	24.1
Running/Jogging	35.5	35.9	28.8	26.7	24.7	22.8

## Needs Analysis

	2010	2008	2006	2004	2002	2000
Fishing	33.8	42.2	40.6	41.2	44.2	49.3
Weight Lifting	31.5	37.5	32.9	26.2	25.1	24.8
Basketball	26.9	29.7	26.7	27.8	28.9	27.1
Billiards/Pool	24.0	31.7	31.8	34.2	33.1	32.5
Golf	21.9	25.6	24.4	24.5	27.1	26.4
Boating, Motor/Power	20.0	27.8	29.3	22.8	26.6	24.2
Target Shooting	19.8	20.3	17.1	19.2	18.9	14.8
Hunting with Firearms	16.3	18.8	17.8	17.7	19.5	19.1
Soccer	13.5	15.5	14.0	13.3	13.7	12.9
Baseball	12.5	15.2	14.6	15.9	15.6	15.6
Tennis	12.3	12.6	10.4	9.6	11.0	10.0
Backpack/Wilderness Camp	11.1	13.0	13.3	15.3	14.8	15.4
Softball	10.8	12.8	12.4	12.5	13.6	14.0
Volleyball	10.6	12.2	11.1	11.8	11.5	12.3
Football (tackle)	9.3	10.5	11.9	8.6	7.8	7.5
Skateboarding	7.7	9.8	9.7	10.3	9.7	9.1
In-Line Roller Skating	7.4	9.3	10.5	11.7	18.8	21.8
Scooter Riding	7.4	10.1	9.5	12.9	13.4	11.6
Skiing (alpine)	7.4	6.5	6.4	6.3	7.4	7.4
Mountain Biking (off road)	7.2	10.2	8.5	8.0	7.8	7.1
Paintball Games	6.1	6.7	8.0	9.4	6.9	5.3
Snowboarding	6.1	5.9	5.2	6.6	5.6	4.3
Target Shooting - Airgun	5.3	5.0	5.6	5.1	4.1	3.0
Hunting w/Bow & Arrow	5.2	6.2	5.9	5.8	4.6	4.7
Water Skiing	5.2	5.6	6.3	5.3	6.9	5.9
Hockey (ice)	3.3	1.9	2.6	2.4	2.1	1.9
Muzzleloading	3.1	3.4	3.7	3.8	3.6	2.9
Wrestling	2.9	na	3.8	na	na	na
Skiing (cross country)	2.0	1.6	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.3
Canoeing	na	10.3	7.1	7.5	7.6	6.2
Cheerleading	na	2.9	3.8	3.8	na	na
Racquetball	na	na	4.0	na	na	3.2

**Table 16: 2010 Youth Participation in Selected Sports with Comparison to 2001**

Participated more than once (in thousands) Seven (7) years of age and older

	Year	TOTAL	Change vs 2001	Total 7-11	Change vs 2001	Total 12-17	Change vs 2001
Total U.S.		251,239		20,262		23,782	
Total U.S.		280,215	11.5%	20,554	1.4%	24,645	3.60%
Baseball	2001	14,868		4,654		4,095	
Baseball	2010	12,533	-15.7%	3,383	-27.3%	2,882	-29.6%
Basketball	2001	28,104		6,356		7,818	
Basketball	2010	26,875	-4.4%	5,533	-12.9%	6,424	-17.8%
Bicycle Riding	2001	39,004		9,753		7,255	
Bicycle Riding	2010	39,789	2.00%	8,041	-17.6%	6,546	-9.8%
Bowling	2001	40,302		5,330		5,893	
Bowling	2010	38,980	-3.3%	5,282	-0.9%	4,911	-16.7%
Fishing (Fresh water)	2001	39,077		5,124		4,480	
Fishing (Fresh water)	2010	29,927	-23.4%	3,354	-34.5%	3,506	-21.7%
Football (Tackle)	2001	8,631		1,460		3,593	
Football (Tackle)	2010	9,318	8.00%	1,888	29.30%	2,904	-19.2%
Golf	2001	26,637		1,011		2,264	
Golf	2010	21,872	-17.9%	1,297	28.30%	1,388	-38.7%
Hockey (Ice)	2001	2,193		384		441	
Hockey (Ice)	2010	3,299	50.40%	513	33.60%	607	37.60%
Mountain Biking (off road)	2001	6,301		530		1,195	
Mountain Biking (off road)	2010	7,242	14.90%	706	33.20%	994	-16.8%
Roller Skating (In-line)	2001	19,225		7,108		5,059	
Roller Skating (In-line)	2010	7,448	-61.3%	1,868	-73.7%	1,590	-68.6%
Scooter Riding	2001	12,675		7,427		3,425	
Scooter Riding	2010	7,354	-42.0%	3,570	-51.9%	1,406	-58.9%
Skateboarding	2001	9,623		4,512		3,961	
Skateboarding	2010	7,706	-19.9%	2,302	-49.0%	2,687	-32.2%
Skiing (Alpine)	2001	7660		614		1453	
Skiing (Alpine)	2010	7383	-3.6%	1227	99.80%	1085	-25.3%
Snowboarding	2001	N/A		N/A		N/A	
Snowboarding	2010	6,112		775		1,210	
Soccer	2001	13,886		5,867		3,831	
Soccer	2010	13,534	-2.5%	4,439	-24.3%	3,362	-12.2%
Softball	2001	13,213		2,486		2,286	
Softball	2010	10,841	-18.0%	1,577	-36.6%	2,060	-9.9%
Tennis	2001	10,911		728		1,963	
Tennis	2010	12,250	12.30%	1,474	102.50%	1,859	-5.3%

### **K. Benchmark Comparison to Other New Jersey Communities**

One method of evaluating the parks and recreation programs and services offered in the community is to perform a benchmarking comparison to other communities. This was prepared as part of the needs assessment process. Responses were received from 21 other communities. Detailed comparisons of the survey are included in Appendix F. These tables provide separate comparisons for the following:

1. Park Land Comparison
2. Budget Comparison
3. Staff Comparison
4. Athletic Field Comparison
5. Aquatic Center Comparison
6. Recreation Center Comparison
7. Open Space Tax

#### Summary of Results

##### 1. Park Land Comparisons

This table indicates that the common factors include the percentage of parkland for active recreation, citizens per active park acre, and total park acres per 1,000 residents. The citizens per park acre category, indicates there are 153 citizens per active park acre in Franklin Township, which is much lower than the average of 256 and close to the median of 153 acres. If County Parks are taken out of the equation, Franklin Township would have 571 persons per active park acre, which is much worse than the average and median.

##### 2. Budget Comparisons

The budget comparisons table also has some categories with common factors, such as the column with the expenditure per person of the communities, which the survey average was \$43 per person and the median was \$40. Franklin Township's budget, which includes a portion of Public Works staff, was at a rate of \$20 per person, well below the average and median. The actual Recreation Budget, without the Public Works staff, is \$799,321.00, which ends up being \$12.8 per person. Most of the other communities surveyed have a much higher expenditure per person.

### 4. Staff Comparisons

Franklin Township has 11 full time Park and Recreation employees (including Public Works staff that maintain parks), and 200 seasonal employees. The full time employees fall close to that of the average and median, while the 200 seasonal is well above that of the average and median. In Franklin Township, the total acres per employee is 10.82, which is slightly lower than that of the median (11.6), and about half that of the average (21.6).

### 5. Athletic Fields Comparisons

This table looks at the various types of fields within the Township. For each of the categories. There is a figure for citizens per field during the prime season, which is the common denominator. For Franklin Township there are 10,383 citizens per field in the prime season for soccer, which is over double the average of 4,768. Softball and cricket are almost double the average of citizens per field. Football has 62,300 people per field during the peak season, which is almost triple the average of 21,231. Basketball is slightly better than the average. Overall, this analysis indicates Franklin Township has a much higher population per field resulting in a shortage of fields and overuse of the fields.

### 6. Aquatic Center Comparisons

Franklin Township currently has one operating public pool and it is only available for summer camp programs. The pool was opened in 2002, which is relatively new compared to other communities. This table will provide some guidance as a new recommended family aquatic center is developed.

### 7. Recreation Center Comparisons

The survey included 15 communities with at least one of some type of indoor gym or recreation center. This table will also provides some direction as a new planned facility is developed for Franklin Township.

### 7. Open Space Tax

The survey included 8 communities that currently have an open space tax. Franklin Township allocates the largest percentage of funds for farm land preservation (53.93%), and open space land acquisition (32.55%). Several communities did not have a detailed breakdown and lumped the use of the funds into two categories: open space, farm land and trail land acquisition (86.6% in Franklin); and open space management, active and passive recreation operations, trails development and management (13.4% in Franklin).



**V. Strategic Plan and Recommendations**

**A. Current Mission Statement and Vision**

1. Current Township Mission

The Township of Franklin shall, through the democratic process, evaluate the needs of the public and shall provide quality, cost effective services to the community.

2. Current Township Vision

Residents of the Township of Franklin will live and thrive in a community that values community pride and spirit, celebrates diversity and creates an environment that provides opportunities for all people so that they develop as healthy, caring, positive, educated and responsible members of the community.

3. Current Mission for the Department of Recreation, Community Celebrations and Park Administration

The mission of the Department of Recreation, Community Celebrations and Park Administration is to improve the quality of life in the community by providing a wide range of services to meet the recreational needs of the public, and by providing and preserving open space and parkland for all to enjoy.

**B. Proposed Vision and Goals**

The Master Plan Steering Committee, the Township Council, and Township leaders envision a parks and recreation system that accomplishes the following goals:

1. Balance:

- a. Provides an appropriate mix of active recreation, passive recreation, and natural environments that are equitably distributed throughout Franklin Township.
- b. Fosters an appreciation of nature and illustrates respect for the natural environment and promotes sustainable natural resource management practices.
- c. Preserves the past while planning for the future.

2. Equal Access:

- a. Provides facilities that are equitably distributed, accessible to persons of all abilities, and for persons with a variety of interests.



3. Quality Experiences:
  - a. Provides parks and facilities that are safe, attractive, well used, and well maintained.
  - b. Provides facilities and program that are unique and are attractive to both existing and potential residents.
  - c. Offers unique and scenic park and recreation opportunities.
  - d. Provides quality athletic fields for children and adults to participate in healthy sports programs. The fields are developed in complexes for efficient maintenance, management and supervisions. The complexes serve the needs of local leagues and host tournaments to generate income.
  - e. Provides an outdoor family aquatic center designed with the whole family in mind. Provides aquatic programs such as aerobics, learn-to-swim, lifesaving, etc.
  - f. Partner with another organization to provide an indoor recreation and community center to supplement the programs offered at the Senior/Community Center. Provides opportunities for fitness, wellness, education, and athletics. Ideally it would include indoor aquatics.
4. Connectivity:
  - a. Is connected with a series of safe pathways and bikeways to provide access to neighborhoods, parks, schools and other destinations for transportation purposes and for recreation. Current and future modes of transportation are considered.
5. Programming Opportunities:
  - a. Engages families and all citizens to participate in healthy indoor and outdoor activities.
  - b. Provides a recreation/community center that offers facilities for fun, fitness, wellness, and a variety of programs for residents of all ages. The center is a community gathering place for families and residents of all ages.
  - c. Includes parks and programs that are well publicized and recognized by the residents.

## Strategic Plan and Recommendations

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6. Fosters Cooperation:
  - a. Includes a partnership of Franklin Township (including several boards of commissions), Franklin Township Schools, athletic organizations, neighborhoods, developers, volunteers, and various organizations to acquire, develop, operate and manage the parks, trails, and facilities.
  - b. Complements the activities, facilities and programs offered by other organizations and businesses serving the community.
  - c. Is supported by an active group of community leaders and volunteers that promotes implementation of the Master Plan over the long term.
7. Improves Franklin
  - a. Significantly adds to the unique identity of Franklin Township as an outstanding place to live, work and play.
  - b. Creates a unique identity for Franklin Township.
  - c. Increases property values.
  - d. Increases the aesthetic beauty and sense of pride in Franklin Township.
8. Fiscally Sound:
  - a. Is funded in an efficient and responsible manner while providing the level of service and maintenance necessary for a high quality system.
  - b. Franklin Township utilizes every opportunity to leverage funding from outside sources such as grants, philanthropy, partnerships, and volunteerism.
  - c. Provides events and programs that generate revenues to support the operations costs.
  - d. Establishes policies or target guidelines for equitable distribution of the Open Space Trust Fund among the various potential uses based upon the findings of the Plan.

### C. Observations, Analysis, and Recommendations

The following are a series of observations, findings, and information gained from the focus groups, workshops and surveys, along with the Consultant's analyses. Throughout the planning process, the Steering Committee and Township Staff reviewed several potential solutions that later became the Plan Recommendations.

#### 1. Existing Park Improvements

##### a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) According to the Mail/phone surveys, about 79% of Franklin residents visited parks in Franklin according to the surveys. This is higher than the national benchmark of 72%. Of those that visited parks, over 44% visited over 10 times in the last year.
- (2) Of the 79% that visited parks in the last year, 27% rated the physical condition as "Excellent" and 60% as "Good." The 27% as "excellent" was slightly lower than the national benchmark of 31% and the combined "excellent" and "good" (87%) was also higher than the national benchmark of 85%.
- (3) The top five parks that residents in the mail/phone survey indicated they visited in the last year included the following. Note that three of the five are not Township owned.

▪ Colonial Park	68%
▪ D & R Canal State Park	27%
▪ Inman Park	19%
▪ Middlebush Park	19%
▪ School District Sites	16%
- (4) The surveys indicated that the parks visited most by residents were generally the same list as above.
- (5) The parks that are visited most provide a variety of facilities such as playgrounds, trails, athletic fields and picnic shelters.
- (6) The improvements to existing parks that were most requested by the households that responded to the survey included:

▪ Restrooms	48%
▪ Drinking fountains	33%

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- Picnic tables & benches 33%
  - Picnic shelters 27%
  - Bike trails and bike lanes 25%
  - Trails 25%
  - Security cameras 23%
  - Playground equipment 22%
- (7) Several of the active athletic fields are provided at school sites which are not well maintained or well defined and there can be scheduling issues with conflicts with after-school programs. The fields cannot be used until after the after-school program, limiting the amount of time they may be used for community programs.
- (8) Most of the athletic fields are in the northern half of the Township.
- (9) “Operating and maintaining Township parks and facilities” was the function indicated highest as “Very important” to residents (75%) in the mail/phone survey.
- (10) The mail/phone survey respondents indicated that residents use Franklin Township Parks (46%) at a higher rate than Somerset County Parks (45%), State Parks (33%), private clubs and sites (26%), or School District land (22%). This conflicts with the responses in #3 on the previous page which indicated that Colonial Park is used at a much higher rate than other parks.
- (11) When the mail/phone survey asked how residents would spend \$100 toward use of the Open Space Trust Fund in Franklin, “improvements/maintenance to existing parks, fields, playgrounds and picnic areas” ranked highest by a large margin at \$29 (\$23 in the web survey) and “development of new active and passive recreation and park facilities” was second at \$17 (\$34 in the web survey).
- (12) When asked how recreation facilities in Franklin compare to facilities in other communities where they have lived or visited, “about the same” was highest at 30% followed by a “little better” at 20% and “much better” at 23%. The web survey respondents did not rate the condition as favorably with only 10% indicating “excellent” and about 51% as “good”.
- (13) In the Public Workshop, participants were asked to place dots on their priority area for use of the Open Space Trust Fund. “Develop new active and passive recreation park

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facilities” ranked highest with 75 votes and “Improve and maintain existing parks” ranked second at 25 votes.

- (14) Many of the Neighborhood Parks and Mini-Parks need maintenance and repairs. Most of them need more accessible paths to the playgrounds and facilities.
- (15) Stakeholder Group and Workshop participants indicated a strong need to improve the existing athletic fields with better turf management and maintenance. Scheduling on the limited quantity of fields was also an issue.
- (16) The community needs playgrounds and parks that are more handicapped accessible.

b. Recommendations:

- (1) Update the playground equipment and safety surfacing.
- (2) Provide additional restrooms at Middlebush Park and at all new community parks of 20 acres or more and drinking fountains at all parks.
- (3) Provide walkways to provide handicap access to all playgrounds, picnic shelters, park facilities and athletic fields.
- (4) Pave, organize and increase the parking at parks where needed.
- (5) Implement a consistent and attractive signage program to identify all Township parks.
- (6) Bring the appearance of all parks up to high standards.
- (7) Provide training for existing and future staff in turf management and athletic field maintenance.
- (8) Develop additional athletic fields to allow some fields to “rest” for a season and allow the turf to become better established and to spread the use over more fields.
- (9) Expand the park facilities at Mini-Parks and Neighborhood Parks to include picnic shelters, game courts, community ball fields, and other facilities as coordinated with the neighborhoods.
- (10) Currently the Trust Fund cannot be utilized for improvements on School District properties. Therefore, a

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separate source of funding is needed to improve and properly maintain the fields on school grounds if the Township is to participate in the improvement or maintenance of these fields.

- (11) Coordinate with neighborhood associations to assist in the monitoring and maintenance of neighborhood parks. (Adopt-A-Park)
- (12) Investigate the development of a Park Ranger program to increase security in the parks. Also investigate use of surveillance cameras to reduce vandalism and negative activities.

### 2. New Park Improvements

#### a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) “Large Community/County Parks” ranked highest (70%) (11<sup>th</sup> on the web survey) and “Small Neighborhood Parks” ranked third (61%) (4<sup>th</sup> on the web survey) among facilities for which residents have a need.
- (2) “Small Neighborhood Parks” ranked 10<sup>th</sup> and “Large Community/County Parks” ranked 15<sup>th</sup> among facilities indicated by households for which their needs are being met 50% or less.
- (3) Among facilities that are most important to households, “Large Community Parks” ranked second and “Small Neighborhood Parks” ranked third in the mail/phone survey.
- (4) Homeowners’ Associations meet some of the demand for close-to-home park space and facilities in selected neighborhoods.
- (5) A comparison to typical level of service standards used throughout the region for developed park land, Franklin is well below the standard for most types of park land including mini-parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks by about 405 acres. This situation will become considerably greater as the population grows from approximately 62,300 today to about 77,400 in 2025 with a shortage of 675 acres.
- (6) An analysis of the parks by areas of the Township (including county parks and school land) indicates that although Ward 1 has a lot of open space and it has the

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highest number of persons per developed park acre at 669. Ward 5 is second at 482. The average for the Township is 66. Therefore, these two wards have much higher population per park acre than the rest of the Township.

- (7) In the Public Workshop, participants were asked to place dots on their priority area for use of the Open Space Trust Fund. “Develop new active and passive recreation park facilities” ranked highest with 75 votes.
- (8) The Township of Franklin provides 37 total parks and open space acres per 1000 residents compared to the average of 16.7 and median of 13.6. Therefore, Franklin provides better than the average and median of the other communities, mainly due to a large amount of open space. In contrast, when comparing only Developed Park Acres, Franklin, provides only 2 park acres per 1000 residents compared to the average of 5.39 and the median of 4.57. Therefore, Franklin provides much less than the others.
- (9) In the benchmarking, by adding the schools and County Parks to the total of developed park acres, the numbers rise to a level closer to the average, mainly due to Colonial Park. The total parks and open space still is much larger than the other communities with a total of 121 acres per 1000 residents compared to the average of 35 and median of about 28. This suggests there is enough land, but a need for more park development.
- (10) When asked to identify reasons preventing households from using parks, recreation facilities and programs in Franklin more, the residents indicated: (National benchmark in parenthesis)
- |   |     |       |
|---|-----|-------|
| ▪ We are too busy                       | 36% | (34%) |
| ▪ I do not know what is being offered   | 27% | (22%) |
| ▪ I do not know locations of facilities | 21% | (12%) |
| ▪ Program or facility not offered       | 15% | (13%) |
| ▪ Too far from my residence             | 13% | (13%) |
| ▪ Lack of quality programs              | 12% | (7%)  |

In most cases, the response is higher than the national median, indicating a lower level of facilities, programs and awareness in Franklin.

- (11) The surveys indicate that the unmet facility needs were highest for the following (based on applying the survey response percentages to the total number of households in the Township):

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Facility	Households
▪ Indoor pools/water parks	6,864
▪ Outdoor swimming pool/water park	6,060
▪ Paved bike trails	5,947
▪ Recreation/community center	5,845
▪ Outdoor amphitheater	5,635
▪ Walking/hiking trails	5,565
▪ Natural areas / nature parks	4,795

- (12) When asked how residents would spend \$100 toward use of the Open Space Trust Fund in Franklin, “improvements/maintenance to existing parks, fields, playgrounds and picnic areas” ranked highest by a large margin at \$29 (\$23 in the web survey) and “development of new active and passive recreation and park facilities” was second at \$17 (\$34 and significantly the highest in the web survey).
- (13) The Park Service Areas Map identifies several areas with gaps in the goal of providing park space close-to-home. The largest gaps are in the Franklin Park area and various areas in Wards 4 and 5 and the eastern portion of Ward 2.
- (14) The analysis of park land distribution by ward identified that Ward 1 is the least well served in terms of persons per developed park acres at 669 acres, followed by Ward 5 at 482 and Ward 4 at 88. The average for the entire Township is 66 persons per developed park acre. Ward 3 is the best served at 24, followed by Ward 2 at 59.
- (15) The benchmarking comparison indicates there are 572 citizens per active park acre in Franklin Township as compared to an average of 350 and median of 191. This indicates a much higher number of citizens per park acre which results in overuse of the parks.

b. Recommendations:

- (1) Some Township owned land could be developed for community parks to serve the unserved portions of the Township. The Dunn/Gunther properties, Franklin Park Natural Area (Catalpa), Marden Preserve (Scott Farm), and Franklin Memorial Forest provide opportunities for larger developments. Proceeding with the previous plans for development of Middlebush Park provides another opportunity. The Township owned space next to the Township Complex on DeMott Lane provides some potential also.

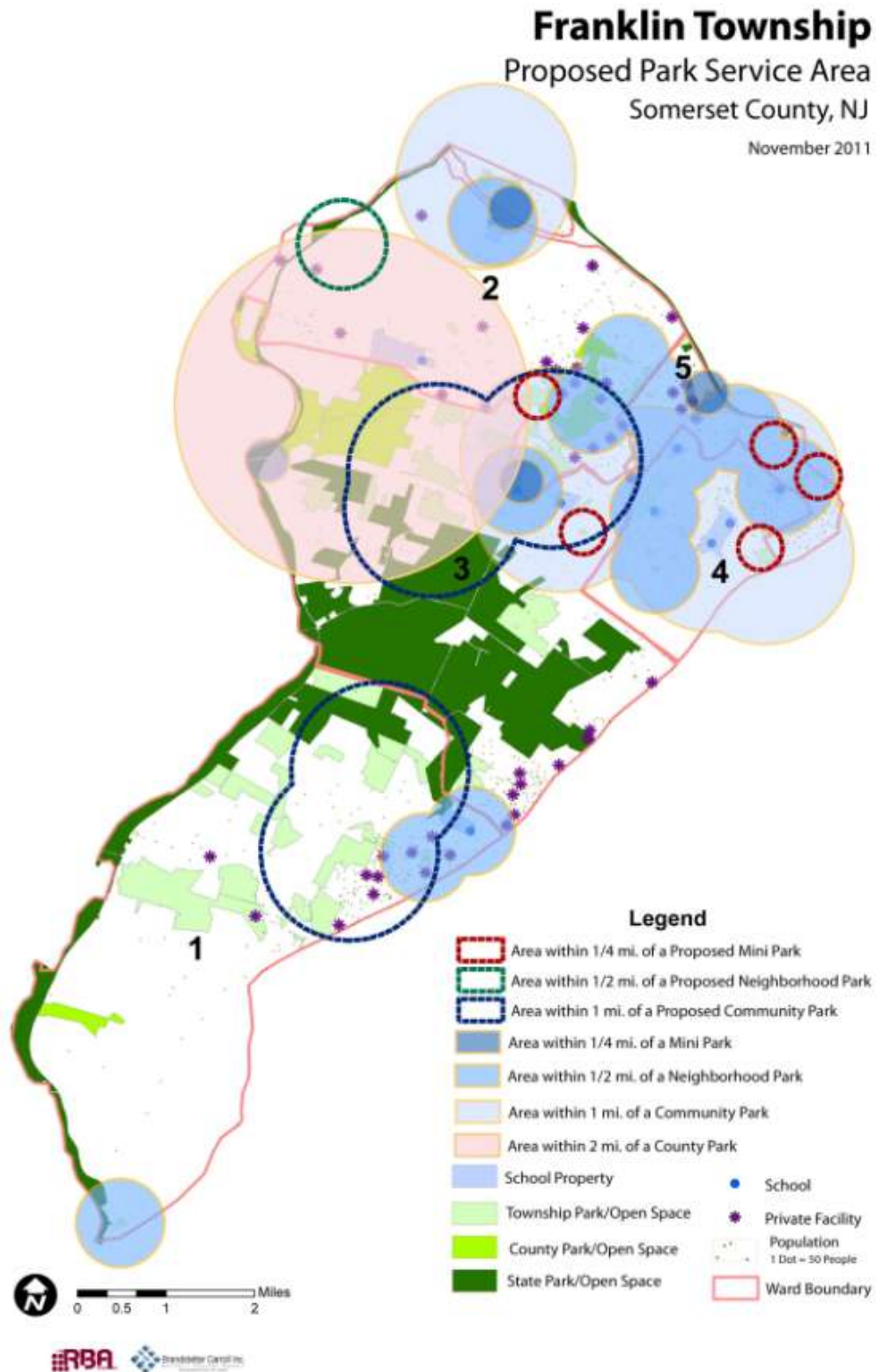


## Strategic Plan and Recommendations

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- (2) Very little undeveloped land can be found in the northern portion of Franklin Township in Wards 4 and 5 and less is in large parcels. Therefore, concentrate on developing close-to-home pocket parks or mini-parks within this more densely populated area. Typical mini-parks would include a playground, picnic shelter, game courts, and possibly play field if room allows. The best option in this area is to improve and expand existing small parks and to develop some of the other small parcels owned by the Township such as Hawthorne Park, Arlington Park, Willow Road Open Space, and the Norris Road Open Space.
- (3) Develop a mini-park in the Hamilton Street Business District to serve as a community gathering space and for events and festivals. Facilities could include a stage/band shell, restrooms, information kiosk, benches, plaza space, and attractive landscape planting.
- (4) Continue to work with developers to set aside useable and adequate land for parks and open space in new residential developments, such as the proposed Summerfield Park.
- (5) Develop an education and marketing campaign to inform residents of the parks, trails and services available. This should be an ongoing effort.
- (6) Look for larger parcels of land in the targeted areas for possible acquisition and development for new parks.
- (7) The Proposed Park Service Areas Map (Figure 18) illustrates the ideal general locations for new park land to meet the needs of the community.
- (8) The Somerset County Park Commission has Master Plans for more development at Colonial Park on the Howe and Mettler Properties. This will meet some of the developed park space needs in the Township, but the facilities will be available to all County residents on a permit basis.
- (9) The Six Mile Run Reservoir site could potentially be used for passive and active recreation, similar to the Jersey Knights Soccer Complex which is on state-owned land. Passive recreation is permitted on the 3,000 acres of the Six Mile Run Reservoir site. Active recreation is permitted outside of the perimeter of any proposed water supply facilities. Impervious cover or structures are limited to a total of two percent of the total land area, or roughly 60 acres, in addition to the area used for walking or bicycle paths.

Figure 18: Proposed Park Service Areas



### 3. Trails

#### a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) Walking, hiking and bike trails were rated very high in the mail/phone surveys including:
  - Walking and hiking trails were second highest among facilities that residents have a need. Bike trails were sixth.
  - Walking, hiking and bike trails ranked first and fifth highest among facilities that are most important to households,
  - Paved bike trails ranked as the third highest unmet need with 5,947 households indicating their needs are being met 50% or less. Walking and hiking trails ranked sixth among facilities whose needs are being met less than 50% with 5,565 households having an unmet need,
  - Bike trails and trails rated fifth and sixth highest of potential improvements households would most like to have made in Franklin Township parks.
- (2) When the mail/phone survey respondents asked how residents would spend \$100 toward parks and open space in Franklin, “development of walking and biking trails” ranked fourth at \$10 behind “improvements to existing parks, playgrounds and picnic areas” at \$29, “development of new active and passive recreation facilities”, and “acquisition of land for open space”.
- (3) Trails and linkages of parks, schools, business areas, and neighborhoods were discussed by several of the stakeholder groups and identified as a high priority in the Community Workshop.

#### b. Recommendations:

- (1) Continue to place emphasis on implementation of interconnecting trails in all new subdivisions.
- (2) Implement the recommendations of the Franklin Township Pathways & Trails Plan (2008). Coordinate these efforts with the Somerset County Park Commission to integrate into a county-wide network of trails.
- (3) Develop an integrated trail system of bikeways and walkways throughout Franklin. Encourage sidewalks where trails are not available.
- (4) Promote and market the existing trail systems in the parks.

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- (5) Place a high priority on the acquisition of land to link parks, neighborhoods, schools and commercial areas in all new open space acquisition.
- (6) Develop a balance of natural, unpaved trails and paved bike/walk trails.
- (7) Develop nature trails to link the many open spaces, wetlands, county park land, township park land, etc.
- (8) Continue to maintain trails at a high level.
- (9) Continue to promote a volunteer base to assist in the development and maintenance of trails.
- (10) Add mountain bike trails to the existing parks. Possibly convert some of the existing hiking trails to dual usage to reduce costs. Focus on “easy” trails as a local place for novices to learn. There are some harder trails in the area once they have skills, but no places for novices to learn.
- (11) Need to ensure that all parks have safe access facilities (marked streets, shared roads, sidewalks, side paths) for pedestrians and bicyclists, including a bike rack in every park.
- (12) Concentrate on development of a north-south connector trails to link the Franklin Park area through Franklin Township Memorial Forest and extending to Colonial Park and ultimately to the D&R Canal.

#### 4. Nature Areas and Nature Education

##### a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) In the Community Attitude and Interest Survey, “natural areas and nature parks” rated the following:
  - “Natural areas and nature parks” ranked fourth highest in the facilities which households have a need with 57% of households indicating this need. This ranks higher than national benchmarking of 50%. It also ranked fourth highest of the facilities that are “Most important” to households.
  - “Nature Programs” ranked third for programs which residents have a need with 35% households indicating a need.

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- “Nature Programs” ranked second for programs with the highest unmet need indicating that there are 4,997 households whose needs are being met 50% or less.
  - “Nature Programs” ranked third among recreation programs that are most important to households at 20%.
  - “Acquisition of land for open space/green space and preservation and environmental purposes” received the third highest amount at \$16 when respondents were asked to allocate \$100 in new funding to various types of parks and recreation facilities
- (2) The need for more nature education has been identified in the stakeholder groups and workshops.
- b. Recommendations:
- (1) Continue to purchase open space with a priority on linkages between parks, schools, neighborhoods and commercial areas.
  - (2) Partner with other organizations, such as Somerset County Park Commission, Franklin Township Schools, NJDEP, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, private non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, and others to provide nature education programs.
  - (3) Hire a summer intern naturalist to conduct nature oriented programs in the parks.
  - (4) Develop an appropriate mix of active, passive and natural areas in park development.
  - (5) Include a natural component to all new park development.
  - (6) Enhance the potential of the Bunker Hill Environmental Education Center through marketing, signage, improved access, and additional parking.
5. Outdoor Athletic Fields
- a. Observations and Analysis:
- (1) In the Community Attitude and Interest Survey (mail/phone survey), sports fields rated the following:

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- “Providing places for outdoor sports programs” (60% in the mail/phone survey - 77% in web survey) ranked fourth of the functions that are very important to residents and fourth among functions that are most important households.
- The following number of households indicated a need for more sports fields in the mail/phone survey (based on applying the survey response percentages to the total number of households in the Township):

Soccer fields	2,593
Cricket pitches	2,367
Youth football fields	1,890
Baseball and softball fields	1,777
Lacrosse fields	894

- (2) Most athletic fields in the Franklin Township are provided by the Township. Limited school land is also used for games and practices.
- (3) Youth baseball is held on fields on land that is leased from the Township.
- (4) There is a very strong demand for athletic fields, especially for practice fields.
- (5) The growth of sports such as lacrosse and cricket, along with the trend for sports to extend their seasons, has strongly increased the demand for rectangular field space.
- (6) Somerset County plans to develop two additions to Colonial Park. The Master Plans for these areas include:
  - 2 softball fields
  - 2 cricket pitches
  - 2 soccer fields
  - 4 small youth soccer fields
  - 2 multi-purpose natural turf athletic fields (65 x 110 yards)
- (7) The Needs Assessment indicates a current need for :
  - 7 baseball/softball fields
  - 10 soccer fields
  - 3 football fields
  - 2 cricket pitches

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- These needs increase over time as the population increases.
  - (8) At least one full size baseball field is needed.
  - (9) Adult softball needs a lighted field.
  - (10) The Little Leagues would like to develop lights to increase play on their fields.
  - (11) There is an effort to provide more girls softball programs, but there is a lack of available fields to support this program.
- b. Recommendations:
- (1) Develop additional athletic fields at existing park land or land to be acquired. Ideally the fields would be developed in complexes with multiple fields for maximum efficiency of management and maintenance, reduced travel time for families, and oversight by league organizations.
  - (2) Light and irrigate existing fields where possible to maximize use.
  - (3) Develop one or more synthetic turf field to be used by all sports at a new or existing park.
  - (4) Improve existing complexes to attract tournaments and to provide higher quality facilities for Franklin residents.
  - (5) Coordinate with Somerset County on the use of the Colonial Park additions when they are developed. Possibly partner with Somerset County on the use and maintenance of the athletic fields.
  - (6) Potential sites to develop athletic fields include Middlebush Park, Dunn/Gunther site, Marden Preserve (Scott Farm), Franklin Park Natural Area (Catalpa), Franklin Township Memorial Forest, and the Jacques Lane Open Space.
6. Programming
- a. Observations and Analysis:
- (1) Due to the lack of a recreation center, indoor programs are limited to spaces that do not need large, high ceiling activities, except those that can be held in the schools. Currently the Community/Senior Center and the schools are the primary locations for programs.

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- (2) Franklin Township offers an extensive program for several senior groups that totals over six hundred members. These include dancing, singing, meals, trips, play cards, guest speakers etc. Additional programs offered to all residents include a therapeutic basketball league, teen drop in center, softball clinics, summer day camps, preschool athletic programs, basketball leagues, youth and adult all held in Franklin Township schools. A few programs such as aerobics, Youth Council, Zumba, therapeutic programs, toddler adventures, and dancing are held at the Senior Center for a minimal number of hours due to conflict with senior programming.
- (3) The community desires additional programming. Providing programs such as adult fitness and wellness programs, youth sports, nature programs, adult sports, learn to swim and water fitness programs, ranked 1 to 6 in the random mail/phone community survey as unmet needs.
- (4) The programs that have the highest unmet demand from the random mail/phone survey include (based on applying the survey response percentages to the total number of households in the Township):

Program	Households
▪ Adult fitness and wellness programs	8,014
▪ Nature programs	4,997
▪ Water fitness programs	4,828
▪ Adult sports	4,790
▪ Adult art, dance, performing arts	4,717

- (5) Providing programs for residents of all ages, teens and for seniors ranked second, fifth and seventh, respectively among functions that could be performed by Franklin in the random mail/phone survey with 65%, 59% and 49% of households indicating it as “very important.”
- (6) The Senior Citizens’ programs in the Community/Senior Center are extremely active with numerous programs provided to the senior citizens.
- (7) The Community Attitude and Interest Survey (random mail/phone survey) identified the top item of an “indoor swimming pool/water park” with 6,864 households (applying the percent response to overall households in the Township) and fourth item of a “recreation/community center” at 5,845 households whose needs were being met



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at less than 50% for an indoor swimming pool and recreation/community center.

- (8) Currently, the Franklin Community/Senior Center and programs in the schools host the primary indoor recreation programs and facilities in the area.
- (9) Focus groups with seniors support the need for additional space in their facility.
- (10) “Adult fitness and wellness programs” ranked first in the programs needed by residents (53%) and ranked as having the highest unmet need.
- (11) The schools gyms and other spaces are used by community organizations for basketball leagues and other activities.
- (12) Based upon previous research by the Consulting Team, the typical annual cost to operate a recreation/community center is in the range of \$20-\$24 per square foot. The typical cost recovery from memberships, fees, etc. is in the range of 75% to 85% of the operating costs, therefore potentially resulting in a significant additional burden to the Township to operate a large facility.

b. Recommendations:

- (1) The very high number of households with unmet needs in the area of adult fitness and wellness programs suggests the need for development of a wellness and fitness center for the community. An ideal situation would be for a public-private partnership where the private or non-profit organization would build and operate a center which could potentially be located on Township owned land. This would be similar to recent proposals to develop a YMCA in the community. Such a facility should be located to allow easy access for all residents in the Township. The center should include approximately 60,000 to 70,000 square feet in a central location that should include the following:
  - Two full size game courts,
  - Elevated track,
  - Locker rooms (small – functional),
  - Multi-purpose community rooms,
  - Game room, youth and teen area,
  - Fitness area,
  - Aerobics area,
  - Indoor competition, lap swim, and family aquatic areas.

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- (2) An additional unmet need is the availability of a gym for current recreation programs and the unmet need for additional adult and youth athletic programs such as volleyball, basketball, wrestling, indoor soccer, etc. There is room behind the Community/Senior Center to build a single gym complex with restrooms to allow the Recreation Department to become less dependent on the Schools for gyms and for hosting programs at times when the schools are not available.
- (3) In the event that a partnership is not developed for the community recreation center, there is still a strong need for indoor adult oriented fitness space and an indoor aquatic facility. The Township could develop and manage their own facility with these components. The fitness and wellness function could be added to the gym addition that was discussed above or combined with an indoor aquatic facility that would be managed by the Township. This facility would include a 25 yard by six lane lap pool, warm water pool, offices, and locker rooms. The Township should conduct a detailed feasibility study to evaluate the facility construction cost, operations costs, potential revenues, and an operating pro-forma before developing any indoor aquatic facility due to the potential for high operating costs.
- (4) Expand marketing for all programs.
- (5) Continue to coordinate with the Franklin Schools for possible additional use of their indoor and outdoor facilities for programming.
- (6) Supplement the program staff with internships from university students majoring in Recreation Administration or nature/environmental education as the demand for additional programs grows.
- (7) Program User Satisfaction
  - Develop monitoring system for customer/user feedback on programs and facilities.
  - Continue to develop an increased level of program and facility statistics in monitoring use and program needs.

### 7. Outdoor Aquatics

#### a. Observations and Analysis:

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- (1) There are no outdoor public aquatic facilities in the Township. The pool at Williams Park is only used for summer camp programs.
- (2) There are 22 pools serving homeowner associations or private clubs.
- (3) Use of outdoor swimming pools and water parks was the second highest unmet demand with 6,060 households (applying the percent response to overall households in the Township) indicating their needs are being met less than 50%. In addition, “spraygrounds and water playgrounds” ranked eleventh with 4,046 households having an unmet demand of greater than 50%.
- (4) “Outdoor swimming pools and water parks” ranked eleventh among facilities for which residents had the highest need in the random mail/phone survey.
- (5) Swimming is the second highest participatory recreation activity in the country following exercise walking.
- (6) The public workshops indicated that residents travel to neighboring communities for swimming.

b. Recommendations:

- (1) The Township should develop an outdoor family aquatic center in a central location. The facility should provide a variety of activities to attract residents of all ages. Basic facilities should include a lap pool, family activity pool with zero depth entry and interactive water play features, lazy river, sprayground, pool house, grass beach area, and shade structures.
- (2) A review of other facilities in New Jersey and other states indicates that a family aquatic center can operate at a break-even scenario if they are properly located and designed and there is adequate population to be served. This is certainly the case in Franklin Township. Fluctuations in weather may impact the income potential.
- (3) Supplement aquatic opportunities by locating spraygrounds in other parks.

8. Maintenance

a. Observations and Analysis:

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- (1) The Franklin Township Public Works Department currently maintain the parks, 150 miles of rights-of-way trees, landscaped areas, Senior Center, and grass cutting of Franklin properties with five to six full time staff. In past years they have had as many as ten staff. With these cuts in staff, there is no time for landscape improvements and the athletic fields do not receive as much turf care as would be ideal. The Public Works Department currently assigned to maintain the parks are understaffed and cannot accomplish the proper maintenance on active recreation areas as well as the many open spaces and natural areas. The maintenance team only has one mowing crew which is insufficient. They are unable to keep up with the landscaping, pruning, over-seeding, aerating, weed control, etc. The Department has equipment for aerating, seeding, etc. for turf care, but the budget for materials and manpower is not available.
  - (2) With the high demand for trails indicated in the surveys and the focus groups, a much higher level of maintenance will be warranted to maintain and monitor the additional trail and park system.
  - (3) The development of additional parks and programming to bring people into the parks will require that Franklin budget additional funds for maintenance. In addition, additional expertise and training will be required in the areas of horticulture, turf care, tree care, and playground safety inspections.
  - (4) The benchmarking survey indicated that Franklin Township has 0.18 full time park and recreation employees per 1000 population, which is less than half of the average of the other communities at 0.44 and median of 0.40.
  - (5) The focus groups and public workshops indicated that a higher level of maintenance is desired to provide safe, functional, and attractive parks for Franklin residents.
  - (6) Parks receive some acts of vandalism.
- b. Recommendations:
- (1) Expand the maintenance department under the direction of the Public Works Department with the additional expertise as outlined above.
  - (2) To maintain the current park and recreation facilities in an adequate condition, the Consultant Team recommends

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adding three full time maintenance personnel resulting in a total of nine staff. The primary workload for this staff should be park maintenance. This increase in staff to maintain the existing parks, recreation facilities, and fields will result in a higher quality level of the facilities and proper turf and field maintenance will help the overused fields to be in better and safer condition as well as provide a better experience for users. In addition, the Senior/Community Center is underutilized. If the Department had two full time maintenance staff working shifts seven days per week, along with additional program and supervisory staff, the center could be open 12 to 15 hours per day, seven days per week for programming for all ages in the community.

- (3) Provide additional maintenance staff and a viable operations budget now and increase as the facilities expand.
- (4) Develop a volunteer base to assist in the maintenance, development, and monitoring of the trail system and parks.
- (5) Expand the adopt-a-park or trail program to promote volunteerism and community support.
- (6) Develop a Ranger Program to install rangers and ambassadors in the park system to provide more eyes on the parks and reduce the amount of vandalism.
- (7) Install security cameras in the parks
- (8) Use portions of the Trust Fund for park maintenance.

### 9. Partnerships

#### a. Observations and Analysis:

Several organizations in the community provide leisure and recreation programs for residents of all ages. This is especially true for youth sports activities, which have placed substantial financial and manpower resources into the youth sports facilities and programs.

#### b. Recommendations:

- (1) Organize a “Friends of Franklin Parks” foundation to be an advocate for this Action Plan and to raise funds through donations, endowments, bequests, trusts, and grants.

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- (2) Establish a potential public/private partnership for the development of specialized facilities.
- (3) Partner with a private or non-profit organization in the development and operation of a recreation and fitness center as discussed in the section on programming.
- (4) Continue partnerships with the Somerset County Park Commission, Franklin Township, Franklin Township Schools, youth sports organizations, State of New Jersey, and other non-profit organizations for trail development and management, land acquisition, and park development.
- (5) Continue an open dialogue and partnerships with public and private schools for facility use and programs.
- (6) Continue an open dialogue among the various groups to cross market, coordinate, and avoid duplication of programs and activities.
- (7) Develop a brochure and use the Franklin Township web site to list available programs, not just for Township activities, but also for the Township, sports organizations, and partner organizations in Franklin. This could include a calendar of events. The process of developing and maintaining the calendar will also be a good tool to coordinate among the various organizations in planning for events and avoiding conflict.

### 10. Budget

#### a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) The combined budgets for parks and recreation from the Township Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments are approximately \$1,249,321. This equates to approximately \$20 per person in the Township. The average expenditure per person of the 19 surveyed communities in New Jersey was \$43 with a median of \$40. Therefore, Franklin spends less per person on parks and recreation than most of the communities that were surveyed in New Jersey.
- (2) The percentage of the budget from user fees was considerably lower for Franklin than the other communities surveyed.

## Strategic Plan and Recommendations

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b. Recommendations:

- (1) Develop a new and expanded fee structure for the use of the ball field complexes to support the maintenance and renovation of the areas as needed.
- (2) Expand program opportunities to increase revenue. This would reduce the percentage that the Township would need to provide from the general fund.
- (3) Continue to pursue grants for the development and operations of parks and programs.
- (4) Establish a “Friends of Franklin Parks” foundation to be an advocate for this Action Plan and to raise funds through donations, endowments, bequests, trusts, and grants.

11. Trust Fund

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) In 1998, the voters of Franklin Township approved a referendum which established the Open Space, Recreation and Farm Land and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.
- (2) The Franklin Township Trust Fund may be used for the following: *(Pursuant to NJ Law NJSA:40:12-15.7.A(1))*
  - Acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes;
  - Development of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes;
  - Maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes;
  - Historic preservation of historic properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas, or objects, and the acquisition of such properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas, or objects for historic preservation purposes; or
  - Payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred by a municipality for any of the purposes set forth.
- (3) To date, the Fund has been primarily used for open space acquisition, farm land preservation, and historic preservation. The Township Open Space Committee has come to the conclusion that they have purchased all of the open space the Township needs with the exception of two

## Strategic Plan and Recommendations

targeted tracts plus any land that will be needed for recreational development. It is much more economical to purchase the development rights of farm land than to purchase the land outright, which accomplishes the goal of preserving the land from development. Another benefit of farm land preservation is that there are more partners and grants to share the costs with the County and State.

- (4) As of October 16, 2011, the Trust Fund had an estimated balance of \$19,231,362.26. After pending properties are purchased at a cost of \$4,386,000 and \$1,400,000 for development of Middlebush Park and \$125,000 for lights at the Little League site are expended, the balance will be \$13,326,362.26. Two bonds have been funded for the Trust Fund purposes with one in 2002 and the other in 2007. Payments are scheduled through 2022 with total remaining payments of \$31,148,456.25. The tax generates approximately \$4,734,522 per year based on the average of the last five years.
- (5) The projected 8-year Township cost (2010-2017) to preserve 75% of the acres of “targeted farms” is \$16,856,000. The estimated cost to preserve two other targeted open space properties is \$680,000.
- (6) A study is currently under way to identify the long term capital needs for historic preservation.
- (7) The cost to upgrade existing parks to current safety and access standards is approximately \$1,922,400, not including major upgrades or additions.
- (8) The surveys and workshops asked the respondents how they would allocate \$100 for the purposes allowed in the Open Space Trust Fund. The following are the responses:

Expenditure	Random Mail/phone Survey Response	Web Survey Response	Public Workshop Votes	Cumulative Franklin Trust Fund Expenditures
Improvements and maintenance of existing parks, fields, playgrounds and picnic areas	\$29	\$23	25	0.33%
Development of new active and passive recreation areas	\$17	\$34	75	4.14%
Acquisition of land for open space/green space for preservation and environmental purposes	\$16	\$13	24	37.81%



## Strategic Plan and Recommendations

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Random Mail/phone Survey Response</b>	<b>Web Survey Response</b>	<b>Public Workshop Votes</b>	<b>Cumulative Franklin Trust Fund Expenditures</b>
Development of walking and biking trails	\$14	\$10	5	0.60%
Preservation of farm land	\$10	\$8	4	53.93%
Preservation of historic sites	\$9	\$8	19	3.20%

This table clearly indicates a preference of those participating in the surveys and public workshops to expend additional funds for developing new park facilities and improving existing parks over acquisition, trails, or preservation.

- b. Recommendations:
  - (1) Refer to Section VIII, Action Plan

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

### VI. Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

The Facility Recommendations and Criteria Section describe the facilities with design criteria intended to define the recommended facilities and provide general guidelines to consider in follow-up planning and design. Photographs of other facilities are included to illustrate the concepts discussed.

#### A. Trails

Hiking trails, bike trails, paved and unpaved trails were among the top activities that residents would use more if facilities were provided. The “unmet demand” percentage illustrated in the community survey shows a very strong desire for more trails and a series of integrated trail systems. The ultimate goal is to have a series of interconnected trails that link neighborhoods, schools, parks, and community facilities. The criteria are followed by site concept plans for each primary park in Franklin Township.

1. In addition to the desire to connect to a county-wide system, the residents also desire the development of trail loops within the parks. These should be both paved and unpaved trails. Paved trails should be developed around the main activity areas of general use parks to link the facilities and to provide a smooth walking surface. Paved trails can help provide ADA accessibility. Natural trails with earth, stone, or bark chip surfaces are appropriate to provide opportunities for nature education, wildlife viewing, and hiking.

The parks with potential additional trails include:

- a. Arlington Park
- b. Dunn and Gunther Sites
- c. Franklin Memorial Forest
- d. Hawthorne Park
- e. Marden Preserve (Scott Farm)
- f. Middlebush Park
- g. Norris Road Open Space
- h. Summerfield Park
- i. Willow Road Open Space



2. Trail Design Criteria

- a. The trails that would be developed would receive a great deal of use according to survey results. These trails would be used for bicycling, walking and jogging. Therefore, the trails in these heavily used areas should be at least 10 feet wide and paved to provide ample room for this wide variety of potential users. Where

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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land is available, a path for wheels (bikes and rollerblades) separated from the other walking paths will avoid conflicts among users. In areas where the slopes are steep or land is not available, the trails can be combined. The initial phases could include natural or wood chip type trails to allow pedestrian access only, but these trails would be damaged during flooding and would not allow for the maximum use of the proposed facility.

- b. It is also recommended that greenways be developed segment by segment, completing each segment entirely before moving on to the next. This will allow the completed segment to become a “utilized example”, therefore building public enthusiasm and support for the project.
- c. Trails for bicycles should be developed to the standards published in the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 1999.
- d. The hike and bikeways routes recommended suggest a three tiered system.
  - (1) Hikeways
    - Class One: Hiking Only
    - Class Two: Hike and Bikeway combined
    - Class Three: Hikeway on the berm of a vehicle right-of-way
  - (2) Bikeways
    - Class One: Bikeway Only
    - Class Two: Hike and Bikeway Combined
    - Class Three: Bikeway shared with vehicles, without a barrier but with marked off lanes and signs indicating bike lane.
  - (3) In this plan, the primary corridors should be Class One or Class Two Trails. Where necessary to connect destinations in developed areas, Class Three Trails are acceptable.

### B. Playgrounds

1. Playgrounds are typically developed at nearly every mini-park, neighborhood, community, regional or county park. Playgrounds should be designed for the age specific group for which they are intended. At larger community parks, areas should be designated for pre-school and school- aged children.

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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2. It is recommended that a variety of experiences be provided at each playground. It is also recommended to use safe and durable materials such as plastic components, plastic coated steel decks, steel posts, and similar materials. The overall design of the playground in each facility should meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission and ADA Guidelines. Proper safety surfacing should be provided under all equipment. Handicap accessibility is a major issue, which must be considered in the design of each playground.
3. At the larger County or Community Parks, it is recommended that larger and very creative destination playgrounds be developed since these parks typically have the infrastructure to handle larger groups of people. Larger Community Parks have the capacity to attract regional populations.
4. All playgrounds must meet minimum ADA requirements, but a higher level of universal access is desired at county and community parks. The main general use parks should have large destination playgrounds where appropriate.
5. Park land with potential for playgrounds include:
  - a. Arlington Park
  - b. Catalpa/Franklin Park Natural Area
  - c. Dunn and Gunther Sites
  - d. Franklin Memorial Forest
  - e. Hawthorne Park
  - f. Marden Preserve (Scott Farm)
  - g. Norris Road Open Space
  - h. Summerfield Park (Tot Lot)
  - i. Willow Road Open Space (Tot Lot)



## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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### C. Athletic Fields

1. The demand for athletic fields is ever increasing as participation grows. It would be ideal for these facilities to be developed in complexes rather than in single fields scattered throughout the Township. A complex is more efficient for the following reason:
  - a. It is more efficient for maintenance and for equipment purchase and installation.
  - b. It increases the potential for concession sales.
  - c. It provides better oversight and convenience to league officials.
  - d. It provides equipment storage in one location.
  - e. The location of many games in one site increases the chance of positioning qualified medical staff at the site where a possible injury or accident may occur.
2. The following are some recommendations and observations for specific types of fields.
  - a. Synthetic Turf Fields – The Township or a sports organization may consider the development of synthetic turf fields. It has been proven that these fields can be used earlier in the year, later in the year, and more often during the playing seasons than natural grass fields, and are safer to play upon. The long term costs will be more for the development, replacement, and long term maintenance, but there will also be more events that can take place on the fields. This is taking advantage of the land without spreading play over several fields.
  - b. Natural Grass Fields – Fields for soccer, baseball, and football should be irrigated if possible to provide better rejuvenation of the lawn. Also, rectangular fields, such as soccer fields, can be rotated in different directions for various seasons or keep some fields out of use each year to allow them to rejuvenate the grass in the wear areas. The seasons for soccer are typically in the spring and fall, which are the prime growing seasons for grass, which makes it difficult on fields with a lot of use to maintain a good lawn.
  - c. Baseball Infields – A variety of admixtures are available for improving infields of ball fields. Fields should contain primarily dirt with admixtures to improve the playing surface if they are used for multiple age groups or girl's softball. In cases where organizations desire grass infields, which require more

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

maintenance, then the organization should be responsible for the maintenance and up keep of those fields.

- d. Support facilities that should be included with these fields include the following where practical:
  - (1) Bleacher/stadium seating.
  - (2) Parking for at least 60 cars per field.
  - (3) Restroom and concession facilities.
  - (4) The fields should be lighted to extend their use

### D. Picnic Areas

The development of picnic areas and picnic shelters was high on the list of items identified in the survey and in the public workshops. Picnic areas are best if developed in a natural setting. Shelters could be developed in each of the Neighborhood, and Community Parks. Community and County Parks provide better opportunities for the development of large shelters (group reservable picnic shelters). These could be used for company picnics, family reunions, church outings, etc. These group rental facilities are best if developed in conjunction with a playground, sand volleyball court, walking trails and open fields for games. Shelters should be located in close proximity to parking and restrooms. Shelters that are the most frequented in other communities are those that are located in wooded areas or that overlook water bodies. The natural settings that are most inviting for picnic areas would include wooded areas, open fields, lakes for fishing, riverfronts and natural stream corridors.

It would also be appropriate to develop picnic shelters and facilities in the vicinity of athletic complexes. Families often spend many hours at the ball fields on game days and this provides a place to get out of the sun and a facility where the teams can meet.

For the above reasons, new picnic areas should be developed as part of all new neighborhood and community parks. Also, the plans for picnic shelters and tables could be implemented at the following parks:

1. Middlebush Park
2. Arlington Park
3. Catalpa/Franklin Park Natural Area
4. Franklin Memorial Forest
5. Hawthorne Park
6. Marden Preserve (Scott Farm)
7. Norris Road Open Space



**Example Picnic Shelters**

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

### E. Restrooms

Respondents identified restroom as most needed feature to improve the parks. This is common in many of the surveys recently completed by this Consulting Team. Ideally, these would include restrooms with running water, flush toilets and sinks for hand washing. Typically, they would be developed of masonry materials, be easy to clean, and would be designed to withstand heavy use and frequent cleaning.

Potential sites where restrooms could be added to improve the use of the park are:

1. Middlebush Park
2. Catalpa/Franklin Park Natural Area
3. Dunn and Gunther Sites
4. Franklin Memorial Forest
5. Marden Preserve (Scott Farm)
6. Temporary toilets at Negri-Nepote and Griggstown Preserves.

### F. Pavilion/Amphitheater Covered Stage

The development of a pavilion, or bandstand with a covered stage at a park in Franklin Township would provide the opportunity for a wider variety of cultural arts programs, concerts, and other presentations that are of value to the community. These structures should be designed to accommodate the types of performances for which the programs would be planned. The photographs indicate some typical types of successful amphitheaters and bandstands that have been used in other communities.



These facilities should be supported by the presence of restrooms, drinking fountains, parking areas and paved walkways for access. One possibility is to develop an amphitheater in the new proposed Marden Preserve (Scott Farm), Franklin Memorial Forest, or Middlebush Park which are all centrally located in the Township.

### **G. Dog Parks**

Dog parks have become a very common element in many park systems throughout New Jersey and the United States. They provide an opportunity for people living in areas with small yards to have a place to let their dogs run free. The proposed park at Willow Road Open Space is one possible location for a dog park and the rear of the Catalpa/Franklin Park Natural Area is another possibility.

Support facilities at dog parks would include:

1. Three fence enclosed areas of approximately one half to one acre each. One would be for large dogs, one for small dogs, and one would be rotated so that there would be a chance for the grass to grow.
2. A drinking fountain with a bowl accessible to dogs.
3. Shade areas and sitting areas.
4. A parking area.
5. Dog waste bags with an appropriate disposal system.

### **H. Outdoor Aquatic Facilities**

#### 1. Outdoor Family Aquatic Centers

A new outdoor family aquatic center is recommended which should be centrally located to all residents of Franklin Township. An ideal location would be within the proposed Franklin Memorial Forest or Marden Preserve, which are both centrally located and could support other complementary family oriented facilities. Included on Figures 19 and 20 are examples of typical features of outdoor family aquatic centers.

#### Design Criteria

- a. A minimum of five acres in size.
- b. Site should be highly visible to increase attendance.
- c. Could be developed in conjunction with other active recreation facilities to share parking.
- d. Could be included within a larger park with other activities that would increase attractiveness for family use.
- e. Easy road access.
- f. Water, sewer and major utilities are required.

Amenities that should be provided include the following:

- a. Pool house with locker rooms.



## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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- b. Large shallow water area with zero depth access and some water spray activities.
- c. Six lanes by 25 meter (minimum) competition and lap swim area.
- d. A minimum of two 30 foot tall water slide towers with varying types of slides and the possibility of develop.
- e. A large water sprayground area for use by smaller children.
- f. Large grass sunbathing area.
- g. Large concession area with picnic shelter within the fence enclosure for use by larger groups.
- h. Several large umbrellas or shade shelters.
- i. A minimum of 200 car parking lot.
- j. High level of lighting on the pool and deck area to allow for night time rentals and evening programs such as movies at the pool, teen parties, luaus, and other water related programs.

### 2. Spraygrounds

The development of spraygrounds, or water playgrounds, has become very popular among communities for a variety of reasons. One reason is that they are less costly to both develop and operate than an outdoor swimming pool or aquatic center. They do not require lifeguards. They do require pumps, filtration system, chemical feeders, and systems similar to swimming pools to recirculate and reuse the water.

The photographs on Figure 21 identify potential elements of some spraygrounds. Features that would be included within the sprayground area include: areas for shade, sitting, restrooms, and parking.

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

Figure 19: Typical Family Aquatic Facility Features



Shallow Water Play Features and Slides



Steps



Lap Pool



Zero Depth Access



Water Slides



Spraygrounds

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

Figure 20: Typical Family Aquatic Centers



## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

Figure 21: Typical Sprayground Features



## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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### I. Recreation/Community Center

1. The Plan recommends the development of a recreation and fitness center. Ideally this facility would be developed with a partner, such as a YMCA, where the Township could provide the land and the partner would develop and operate the center. The facility should include a minimum:
  - a. A gymnasium area large enough for two-full sized basketball courts.
  - b. A large cardio-vascular fitness area with exercise machines.
  - c. Indoor aquatics area with lap pool, family activity and possibly a warm water therapy pool.
  - d. Aerobics room.
  - e. Community meeting room with kitchen facilities.
  - f. Concession and snack bar.
  - g. Walking track.
  - h. Children's activity rooms and babysitting rooms.
  - i. Teen lounge.
  - j. Locker rooms.
  - k. Restrooms.
  - l. Administrative office space.
  - m. Large storage rooms.

Figure 22 provides examples of these elements within recreation centers.

2. In the event that a partner is not found for the recreation center, the Township should develop a gymnasium and fitness addition to the Senior-Community Center. This could be placed behind the existing facility and would complement the activities of the Senior Center. The facility would include one gymnasium, locker/restrooms, and a fitness area with free weights and cardio machines.
3. Recreation/Community Center Design Criteria
  - a. Approximately seven acres required for the building and parking.
  - b. Could be located within a larger park with other facilities and activities, but not absolutely necessary.
  - c. Should be easily accessible by major roads throughout the County.
  - d. Does not require the high level of visibility because many of the activities are programmed.
  - e. Water, sewer, and major utilities are required.
  - f. Parking for a minimum of 300 cars.

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

Figure 22: Typical Community/Recreation Center Features



Gymnasium/Game Courts



Indoor Soccer Field



Cardio-vascular Area



Indoor Sports



Walking/Jogging Track



Multi-Purpose Rooms



Game Room



Lounge Area

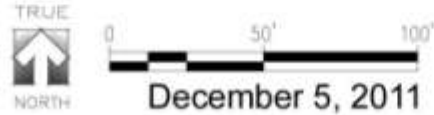
### J. Signage

Proper signage is a key factor to allowing the community to find and relate the parks to a quality of life asset provided by the Township. Each park should have a quality and consistent sign to identify the parks, and a series of coordinated way finding signs to provide directions to the parks and directions to facilities within the larger parks. These should also be coordinated with educational signs and sign boards/kiosks where they are needed for more detailed park program information and park maps.

### K. Site Concept Plans

Site Concept Plans are included in this section to illustrate **possible configurations** of proposed facilities at some new parks. These plans should be used as a **starting point for further discussions with the community, users, and neighbors in the design of the parks**. Further investigation of these parks is required to determine their capability to support the desired facilities and to identify the most appropriate arrangement of facilities.

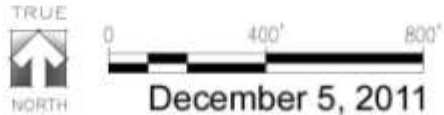
Figure 23: Arlington Park Concept Plan



Arlington Park  
Franklin Township  
Somerset County, New Jersey



Figure 24: Catalpa/Franklin Park Natural Area Concept Plan



December 5, 2011

**Catalpa/Franklin Park Natural Area**  
 Franklin Township  
 Somerset County, New Jersey

Figure 25: Hawthorne Park Concept Plan



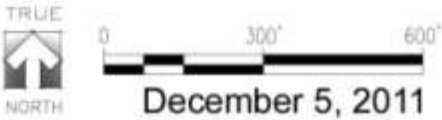
November 11, 2011

**Hawthorne Park**  
Franklin Township  
Somerset County, New Jersey

Figure 26: Middlebush Park Concept Plan



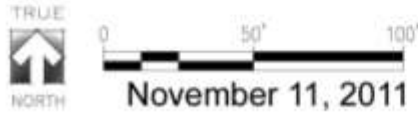
Design Based on plans prepared by Remington, Vernick & Vena Engineers



December 5, 2011

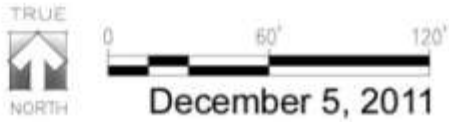
**Middlebush Park**  
 Franklin Township  
 Somerset County, New Jersey

Figure 27: Norris Road Open Space Concept Plan



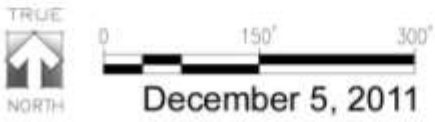
**Norris Road Open Space**  
Franklin Township  
Somerset County, New Jersey

Figure 28: Senior/Community Center Addition Concept Plan



**Senior/Community Center Addition**  
Franklin Township  
Somerset County, New Jersey

Figure 29: Summerfield Park Concept Plan



Summerfield Park  
Franklin Township  
Somerset County, New Jersey

Figure 30: Willow Road Open Space Concept Plan



**Willow Road Open Space**  
Franklin Township  
Somerset County, New Jersey

**L. Capital Improvement Costs**

The major recommendations were identified earlier in Section VI. This section will provide detailed itemization of the improvements to be made at each existing park, as well as an order of magnitude cost estimate. The costs for improving existing parks to bring them up to standards are included in Appendix B-2 and are included on the following table in Part B. These budget costs assume the projects will be bid and built by a contractor, and will be designed to high standards to last a long time. The general budget cost for the development of the new recommended parks is also identified in this section. The reader must keep in mind that it is not expected for the Township to bear all of these costs. Some could be funded or provided by the County or other entities such as homeowner associations, developers, non-profit organizations, leagues, or other agencies. Grants should also be applied for to supplement Township funds. The proposed development is planned to meet the needs of the Township and residents over a period of 10-20 years or more. These implementation costs do not include land acquisition.

**M. Park Improvement Costs**

The project costs are order-of-magnitude budget estimates. The concept plans provided are very general and the designs should be coordinated with neighborhoods and park users through a more formal park design process. They are intended to illustrate possible park configurations and how the proposed facilities could fit on the site. These figures are based upon an analysis of recently developed parks in New Jersey and adjacent states. These figures include contingencies, design costs, and construction costs.

**Table 17: Capital Improvement Costs**

The following project costs are order-of-magnitude cost estimates. The concept plans provided are very general and the designs should be coordinated with neighborhoods and park users through a more formal park design process. They are intended to illustrate possible park configurations and how the proposed facilities could potentially fit on the site. Each site should be evaluated for environmental constraints and conditions.

**A. New Parks and Facilities**

**1. Community Parks**

**a Middlebush Park (T-35)**

Synthetic turf field & entrance improvements (with 2nd grass field) \$1.4 M approved	Already budgeted
Future improvements	
Multi-purpose fields (3) - irrigated	\$180,000
Second synthetic turf field	\$700,000
Bleachers	\$150,000
Lighting of 2 Synthetic Turf Fields	\$475,000
Baseball field	\$120,000
Restroom	\$200,000
Utilities	\$200,000



## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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	Picnic Shelter (2)	\$120,000	
	Basketball courts (2)	\$60,000	
	Pave existing parking	\$66,000	
	Road to new parking	\$25,000	
	New parking	\$100,000	
	Pave road	\$64,000	
	Trails (+/- 9,000') Unpaved	\$60,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$2,520,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$252,000	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$2,772,000</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding (15%)	\$415,800	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$3,187,800</b>	<b>\$3,187,800</b>
<b>b</b>	<b>Central Township Community Park #1</b>		
	Family aquatic center	\$6,000,000	
	Large all-access playground	\$300,000	
	Restroom	\$120,000	
	Picnic shelter (2)	\$160,000	
	Multi-purpose rectangular fields (2) - irrigated	\$160,000	
	Bike trail	\$93,000	
	Walking trail	\$27,000	
	Parking	\$250,000	
	Road	\$30,000	
	Utilities	\$145,000	
	Earthwork	\$444,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$7,729,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$772,900	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$8,501,900</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding (15%)	\$1,275,285	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$9,777,185</b>	<b>\$9,777,185</b>
<b>c</b>	<b>South Central Township Community Park</b>		
	South baseball complex		
	4 field youth baseball/softball complex - irrigated	\$600,000	
	Lights	\$450,000	
	Restroom/concession building	\$200,000	
	Parking	\$240,000	
	Road	\$20,000	
	Utilities	\$50,000	
	North Area		
	4 soccer fields (Minimal disturbance)	\$150,000	
	1 large lighted adult baseball field - irrigated	\$400,000	
	Parking	\$450,000	
	3 central soccer fields - irrigated	\$135,000	
	2 basketball courts	\$60,000	
	Restroom/shelter	\$150,000	

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

	Utilities	\$50,000	
	Playground	\$80,000	
	Road	\$81,000	
	Trail	\$160,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$3,276,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$327,600	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$3,603,600</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$540,540	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$4,144,140</b>	<b>\$4,144,140</b>
<b>d</b>	<b>Franklin Park Natural Area (Catalpa) (T-19)</b>		
	Northeast Area		
	Cricket pitch	\$45,000	
	Parking	\$50,000	
	2 basketball courts	\$60,000	
	2 tennis courts	\$60,000	
	10 car parking at tennis	\$10,000	
	2 rectangular fields	\$100,000	
	Parking at fields	\$100,000	
	Picnic Area		
	Shelter/restroom	\$150,000	
	Utilities	\$80,000	
	2 tennis courts	\$60,000	
	Tennis/Handball wall	\$50,000	
	Rear south area		
	Cricket pitch and earthwork	\$100,000	
	Parking (60)	\$60,000	
	Playground	\$80,000	
	Shelter/restroom	\$60,000	
	Utilities	\$80,000	
	Road	\$135,000	
	Earthwork	\$500,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$1,780,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$178,000	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$1,958,000</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$293,700	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$2,251,700</b>	<b>\$2,251,700</b>
<b>e</b>	<b>Senior / Community Center Gym Addition</b>		
	Gymnasium addition with Adult Wellness Gym, fitness area, restrooms, office	\$3,000,000	
	Parking	\$100,000	
	Utilities	\$60,000	
	Roadway	\$12,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$3,172,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$317,200	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$3,489,200</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$523,380	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$4,012,580</b>	<b>\$4,012,580</b>

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

<b>f</b>	<b>Indoor Aquatic Center</b>	<b>\$2,700,000</b>	
	Indoor 6 lane by 25 yard lap pool		
	Warm water pool		
	Offices, locker rooms		
	Parking		
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$4,000,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$400,000	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$4,400,000</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$660,000	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$5,060,000</b>	<b>\$5,060,000</b>
<b>g</b>	<b>Central Township Community Park #2</b>		
	Youth Baseball/Softball Complex		
	4 baseball/softball fields - irrigated	\$600,000	
	Lighting	\$450,000	
	Concession restroom building	\$200,000	
	Parking	\$240,000	
	Soccer Area		
	4 rectangular fields - irrigated	\$180,000	
	Parking	\$360,000	
	2 picnic shelters	\$120,000	
	Playground	\$80,000	
	Amphitheater	\$300,000	
	Restroom building	\$150,000	
	Site Work		
	Road	\$120,000	
	Bridge	\$100,000	
	Trails	\$120,000	
	Earthwork	\$750,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$3,770,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$377,000	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$4,147,000</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$622,050	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$4,769,050</b>	<b>\$4,769,050</b>
<b>h</b>	<b>Franklin Middle School Improvements</b>		
	Home for Middle School & Pop Warner Youth Football & Youth Track Program		
	Synthetic turf field	\$800,000	
	New lights	\$200,000	
	Restrooms	\$200,000	
	Storage / Concession Stand	\$150,000	
	Upgrade / resurface track	\$300,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$1,650,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$165,000	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$1,815,000</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$272,250	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$2,087,250</b>	<b>\$2,087,250</b>

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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### 2. Neighborhood / Mini-Parks

#### a Hamilton Street Park (Location TBD)

Gazebo/bandstand	\$200,000	
Plaza space	\$50,000	
Landscaping	\$24,000	
Information kiosks	\$15,000	
Benches	\$6,000	
Lighting	\$20,000	
Sod	\$2,000	
<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$317,000</b>	
Contingency (10%)	\$31,700	
<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$348,700</b>	
Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$52,305	
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$401,005</b>	<b>\$401,005</b>

#### b Arlington Park (T-1)

Basketball court	\$30,000	
Small picnic shelter	\$60,000	
Playground	\$80,000	
Parallel parking	\$15,000	
Walkway	\$10,000	
Clearing	\$2,500	
Seeding	\$3,000	
<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$200,500</b>	
Contingency (10%)	\$20,050	
<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$220,550</b>	
Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$33,083	
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$253,633</b>	<b>\$253,633</b>

#### c Norris Road Open Space (T-41)

Playground	\$60,000	
Swing set	\$20,000	
Basketball court	\$30,000	
Trail	\$6,000	
Parking	\$10,000	
Road	\$4,000	
Clearing	\$6,000	
Seeding	\$4,000	
<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$140,000</b>	
Contingency (10%)	\$14,000	
<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$154,000</b>	
Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$23,100	
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$177,100</b>	<b>\$177,100</b>

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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<b>d</b>	<b>Willow Road Open Space (T-52)</b>		
	Playground	\$60,000	
	Swing set	\$20,000	
	Basketball court	\$30,000	
	Dog park	\$30,000	
	Trail	\$12,000	
	Parking	\$25,000	
	Clearing	\$6,000	
	Seeding	\$4,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$187,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$18,700	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$205,700</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$30,855	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$236,555</b>	<b>\$236,555</b>
<b>e</b>	<b>Summerfield Park</b>		
	To be built by the developer per the development agreement.		
	Baseball field		
	Rectangular field		
	Playground		
	Tennis courts		
	Bocce courts		
	Basketball courts		
	Road and parking		
<b>f</b>	<b>Hawthorne Park (T-27)</b>		
	Playground	\$60,000	
	Swing set	\$20,000	
	Basketball court	\$30,000	
	Tennis courts (2)	\$60,000	
	Picnic shelter	\$30,000	
	Trail	\$25,000	
	Footbridge	\$70,000	
	Clearing	\$5,000	
	Seeding	\$6,000	
	Road	\$24,000	
	Parking	\$24,000	
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$306,000</b>	
	Contingency (10%)	\$30,600	
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$336,600</b>	
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$50,490	
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$387,090</b>	<b>\$387,090</b>

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

<b>g</b>	<b>Other Small Park Improvements and Upgrades</b>			
	Budget for improvements to add the following			
	Primarily in Wards 4 and 5 with infill of small lots as mini-parks.			
	5 basketball courts	\$150,000		
	5 picnic shelters	\$300,000		
	5 playgrounds	\$300,000		
	Contribution to construction of a pedestrian bridge near Easton and JFK to the Canal Greenway	\$100,000		
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$850,000</b>		
	Contingency (10%)	\$85,000		
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$935,000</b>		
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$140,250		
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$1,075,250</b>	<b>\$1,075,250</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Nature Parks</b>			
<b>a</b>	<b>Bunker Hill Environmental Center</b>			
	Upgrade entrance road and parking	\$250,000		
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>		
	Contingency (10%)	\$25,000		
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$275,000</b>		
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$41,250		
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$316,250</b>	<b>\$316,250</b>	
	<b>Total New Parks and Facilities</b>		<b>\$38,136,588</b>	
<b>B.</b>	<b>Existing Park Improvements and Upgrades</b>			
	From the Park Inventory Qualitative Assessment Sheets			
	High/Short Term Priority	\$155,300		
	Medium Priority	\$820,100		
	Low/Long Term Priority	\$947,000		
		<b>\$1,922,400</b>	<b>\$1,922,400</b>	
<b>C.</b>	<b>Total - All Park Improvements</b>		<b>\$40,058,988</b>	
<b>D.</b>	<b>Indoor Recreation and Fitness Center with an Indoor Aquatic Facility</b>			
	60,000 to 70,000 square foot facility	\$16,000,000		
	<b>Subtotal for Construction</b>	<b>\$16,000,000</b>		
	Contingency (10%)	\$1,600,000		
	<b>Construction Total</b>	<b>\$17,600,000</b>		
	Design/survey/bidding/permitting (15%)	\$2,640,000		
	<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$20,240,000</b>	<b>\$20,240,000</b>	

## Recreation Facility Recommendations and Criteria

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**VII. Historic Preservation Action Plan**

**A. Recommendations for Use of Franklin Township Trust Funds for Historic Preservation Projects**

On Thursday, January 26, 2012, a meeting was held in the Township Municipal Building to discuss numerous issues concerning the preservation, stabilization, and future use and ownership of the twenty-one (21) historic buildings and structures owned by the township. This meeting was called to review the recommendations made to the Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC), by the Historic Preservation Consultant Wayne T. McCabe, P.P., concerning what work should be undertaken on each building or structure and which structures should be released from public ownership. The recommendations in this report are being made to the Council Open Space Committee.

Those attending the meeting included: Barbara Lawrence, Vice Chairman of the HPC; Tom Gale, Chair of the HPAC; Barbara tenBroeke, member of the HPAC; Ted Chase, Councilman; Rozalyn Sherman, Councilwoman; Wayne T. McCabe, Historic Preservation Consultant; and Robert von Zumbusch, R.A. Barbara Lawrence served as the moderator for the work session.

The first order of business was to review the work to be done on each of the eleven (11) building sites, determine whether or not the buildings and structures are to remain in public ownership, and then prioritize the work to be done. The following is a summary concerning each of the eleven sites:

1. Tulipwood

If the facility cannot be used as a cultural arts center, then the recommendation is to sell the property to someone in the private sector, with an architectural façade easement in place and a clause having been placed in the deed precluding any further subdivision and any proposed action for the exterior of the building or on the property would have to receive approval from the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission.

The HPAC has recommended that the scope of work outlined in the consultant's report be undertaken (painting, electrical work, construction and other debris removal, minor window and window well repairs, and plumbing repairs).

Recommend that the building be sold.

2. Pleasant Plains Schoolhouse

The HPAC recommends that the building be cleaned out, leaving the construction timbers and windows, and undertaking minor repairs to the exterior.



The building can temporarily be used as a storage facility for any artifacts that are on township owned historic sites that will have to be demolished. At a later date, the HPAC felt the building could be restored as a single room schoolhouse and used as a learning experience for local school children in the lower grades.

### 3. Stoothoff – Gunther House

This farm dwelling is presently being analyzed by FORD3, an architectural firm in Princeton, to determine what actions must be undertaken to stabilize the building. A second architectural firm, The Cherry Valley Group (of Cherry Valley, NY), is preparing a report on the potential uses of the building and the property. One use of the building could be for promoting agricultural heritage. The site is a part of the historic view-shed on South Middlebush Road. However, a great deal of work will have to be done on the dwelling in order to stabilize it and bring it up to code for use as a teaching tool or heritage site.

One of the other problems with the site is the structural degradation of the majority of the farm out-buildings. Essentially, only the electrical shed and the privy are structurally sound. The other barns and sheds have extensive structural failures that make them “attractive nuisances,” and dangerous.

The HPAC wants to review the recommendations of the two architectural firms before making a final recommendation on the disposition of the property. One of the options discussed was the recommendation to sell the property to someone in the private sector, with an architectural façade easement in place and a clause having been placed in the deed precluding any further subdivision and any proposed action for the exterior of the building or on the property would have to receive approval from the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission.

The HPAC recommends the immediate removal of the underground gasoline storage tank that is located in front of one of the work sheds. It also recommends that farm implements, tools and artifacts found in the barns and sheds be removed and stored in the Pleasant Plains School.

### 4. Van Liew – Suydam House

The HPAC notes that the restoration work recommended by the Historic Preservation Consultant should be undertaken as set forth in his report. The Commission also feels that this former farmhouse can be used as a facility for lectures and meetings for promoting cultural arts on the township.

There are minor repairs that have been recommended by the Historic Preservation Consultant that the HPAC want to have implemented, including re-flashing, replacement of some window sills, cleaning out a flu

and capping a chimney, and restoration of plaster ceilings and walls damaged by water infiltration.

5. Wyckoff – Garretson House

The HPAC feels that this facility should continue to be used for cultural arts functions. It was noted that there is very little work that has to be done on this facility, as a great deal of restoration and preservation work has already been completed.

6. Garretson – Hagemen House Complex

The HPAC notes that there has been extensive restoration, preservation and reconstruction work undertaken on the three barn structures. The Historic Preservation Consultant has recommended a number of items that will require attention during this year, including replacement of the entire roof on the main section of the house, repair to the walls and ceilings that were damaged by water infiltration, rebuilding the built-in gutters, replacement/repair of broken or missing clapboard, repair of the wood soffits damaged by water infiltration, electrical work, replacement of the furnace, and creating new on-site parking areas, using materials that will not exacerbate storm water runoff problems.

The HPAC recognizes that this complex of buildings has served and will continue to serve, as a significant center for a wide variety of cultural events and functions.

7. Kingston School

The HPAC is recommending that the former Kingston School facility be converted into the primary cultural arts center for the township. This recommendation is made based on the fact that there are a number of classrooms, administrative offices, large dining area and equally large floor area that was a gymnasium available in this facility. There are also several bathroom facilities in the complex.

Aside from the work recommended by the Historic Preservation Consultant, the HPAC is recommending the flat roof on the 1960's addition be completely replaced in the very near future, as it is leaking throughout the addition and has caused considerable damage. Additionally, the HPAC is recommending a firm specializing in mold remediation be engaged to remove the mold that has developed throughout the entire building complex. It is also recommended that an alarm system be installed, and tied into the municipal police department.

8. Dunn House

The HPAC is of the opinion that the Dunn House and property should be sold, as the Commission does not see where this property can effectively

and economically be used for a township purpose. The HPAC recommends the work proposed to be done on the house by the Historic Preservation Consultant be undertaken in order to stabilize it.

The property should be sold to someone in the private sector, with an architectural façade easement being put in place. Additionally, a clause would have to be placed in the deed precluding any further subdivision and any proposed action for the exterior of the building or on the property would have to receive approval from the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission. The Commission further recommends that the township staff check the resolution of the planning board and the deed for the property to make sure there are no restrictions on the township selling the property.

9. Van Wickle House

The HPAC is of the opinion that the Van Wickle House, along with the carriage barn, has served, and will continue to serve, as a significant facility for cultural events and environmental education. The HPAC recommends the work proposed to be done on the house by the Historic Preservation Consultant be undertaken in order to stabilize and preserve the building.

10. 1439 Canal Road House and 1445 Canal Road House

The two dwellings were acquired by the township and are located at the intersection of Canal Road and Old Georgetown Road. Both houses are deteriorated, with 1439 being the worst of the two. The HPAC is recommending the work proposed by the Historic Preservation Consultant, and is further recommending that the rear addition on 1439 be completely removed and the rear wall of the dwelling be restored. This will necessitate the reconfiguration of the custom-fitted tarp that is currently fitted over the roof and entire second floor of the entire building.

The HPAC further recommends that the two buildings be irrevocably legally yoked together through the deeds, and that they be sold to someone in the private section for use as a dwelling and office. A preservation façade easement would also have to be put in place prior to the sale of the property.

The HPAC further recommends that, in the case of all buildings that are sold, a clause should also be placed in the agreement of sale that the Township of Franklin shall hold the right-of-first-refusal to repurchase the buildings if they are placed on the market for sale.

The HPAC also discussed several additional areas of concern relating to the preservation of historic properties in the township:

1. The Meadows Foundation
  - a. The Foundation has largely achieved their original mission
  - b. Franklin Township should assist the Meadows Foundation with capacity building to plan for the future of the organization and inspire the use of resources to move from preservation to program focus
  - c. Meadows Foundation continues to program for the four sites
  - d. Franklin Township manages cyclical maintenance
  - e. Meadows Foundation managed sites may be used for cultural events planned by the Cultural Arts Council
2. Hold Township Vision Workshop Re: Historic Preservation and History
  - a. Encourage participation from all local historic preservation related nonprofit organizations in the township and those organizations that have a vested interest in preservation efforts that will directly impact the township
  - b. Encourage these organizations to collaborate in order to pool resource development, governance, and to increase local activism
  - c. Develop heritage tourism

HPAC recommends against use of any historic properties in developing active recreation facilities, with the exception of the Kingston School facility which already has an active recreational facility on the property.

HPAC does not plan future purchase of historic sites or historic easements, but may respond to urgent or special opportunities

HPAC will work with the Historic Preservation Consultant to complete the CLG application, undertake the township-wide intensive level historic resources inventory, prepare design guidelines, develop interpretive signage for the historic properties owned by the township, grant writing, preparation of National Register nominations for specific properties that are identified in the intensive level inventory, etc. The consultant will revise the draft plan for township owned historic sites. The Historic Preservation Consultant with the HPAC will prepare Historic Preservation element for Master Plan.

## Historic Preservation Action Plan

### 1. Budget

Consultant has revised the three-year stabilization capital improvement budget to \$751,000, based on use recommendations. These capital improvement funds are to be budgeted over the next three years

Township Public Works will manage cyclical maintenance of Township owned historic resources

The Township should budget additional annual funds to support an HP consultant, survey of historic resources, historic preservation easements, interpretive signage, research and documentation, design guides, project management, grant writing and grant management.

The recommended amounts, beyond the three-year capital improvements budget:

- a. Year One - \$250,000
- b. Year Two - \$200,000
- c. Year Three - \$200,000
- d. Each year following - \$150,000

### 2. Funding Note 1:

In addition to the Township Open Space Trust, funds may be obtained from Somerset County, NJ Historic Trust, NJ State Historic Preservation Office, NJ Certified Local Government program, NJ Cultural Trust, or private foundations.

Site	Immediate	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Term Total
<b>Tulipwood</b>					
Exterior Total	\$850.00	\$2,500.00	\$27,500.00	\$3,600.00	\$34,450.00
Interior Total	\$300.00	\$4,400.00	\$12,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$21,700.00
Site Total	\$1,150.00	\$6,900.00	\$39,500.00	\$8,600.00	\$56,150.00
<b>Pleasant Plains Schoolhouse</b>					
Exterior Total	\$0.00	\$1,300.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,300.00
Interior Total	\$0.00	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$600.00
Site Total	\$0.00	\$1,900.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,900.00
<b>Stoothoff - Gunther</b>					
Exterior Total	\$13,000.00	\$0.00	\$54,100.00	\$0.00	\$67,100.00
Site Total	\$13,000.00	\$0.00	\$54,100.00	\$0.00	\$67,100.00

## Historic Preservation Action Plan

Site	Immediate	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Term Total
<b>Van Liew Suydam</b>					
Exterior Total	\$5,000.00	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$0.00	\$14,000.00
Interior Total	\$0.00	\$6,700.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$6,700.00
Site Total	\$5,000.00	\$11,200.00	\$4,500.00	\$0.00	\$20,700.00
<b>Wyckoff - Garretson</b>					
Exterior Total	\$0.00	\$700.00	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	
					\$2,700.00
Site Total	\$0.00	\$700.00	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,700.00
<b>Garretson - Hageman</b>					
Exterior Total	\$63,000.00	\$27,600.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$95,600.00
Interior Total	\$6,000.00	\$700.00	\$800.00	\$1,000.00	\$8,500.00
Site Total	\$69,000.00	\$28,300.00	\$5,800.00	\$1,000.00	\$104,100.00
<b>Kingston Schoolhouse</b>					
Site Work	\$1,500.00	\$4,300.00	\$0.00	\$10,500.00	\$16,300.00
Total					
Exterior Total	\$0.00	\$152,500.00	\$16,500.00	\$9,500.00	\$178,500.00
Interior Total	\$0.00	\$40,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$45,000.00
Site Total	\$1,500.00	\$196,800.00	\$16,500.00	\$25,000.00	\$239,800.00
<b>Dunn House</b>					
Exterior Total	\$55,000.00	\$37,900.00	\$10,500.00	\$9,000.00	\$112,400.00
Interior Total	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	800.00	\$0.00	\$4,800.00
Site Total	\$55,000.00	\$41,900.00	\$11,300.00	\$9,000.00	\$117,200.00
<b>Van Wickle House</b>					
Exterior Total	\$0.00	\$13,500.00	\$8,000.00	\$2,700.00	\$24,200.00
Interior Total	\$16,700.00	\$0.00	\$450.00	\$0.00	\$17,150.00
Site Total	\$16,700.00	\$13,500.00	\$8,450.00	\$2,700.00	\$41,350.00
<b>1439 Canal Road</b>					
Exterior Total	\$0.00	\$69,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$69,000.00
Interior Total	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Site Total	\$0.00	\$73,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$73,000.00
<b>1445 Canal Road</b>					
Exterior Total	\$22,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,000.00
Site Total	\$22,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,000.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$183,350.00</b>	<b>\$379,200.00</b>	<b>\$142,150.00</b>	<b>\$46,300.00</b>	<b>\$751,000.00</b>



## VIII. Action Plan

### A. Introduction

After several months of public participation, site analyses, opinion surveys, review of previous planning efforts, needs assessment, and numerous committee meetings, the Consultants have developed an understanding of the needs for Franklin Township. It is the Consulting Team's belief that all of the community needs can be accomplished with the Open Space, Recreation and Farm Land and Historic Preservation Trust Fund (Trust Fund), leveraged with grant funding and outside sources and partnerships, to maintain the rural character of Franklin Township and improve the quality of life features that the residents desire. The goals of maintaining the Township's unique character, preserving farm land and historic sites, providing a higher quality of park and recreation opportunities in a community that is connected by a series of bike trails can be accomplished. The following are strategies and policies for the Township Council to consider in their allocation of the Trust Fund in the future.

### B. General Actions

1. **Upgrade Current Parks** - Bring all current parks up to a higher quality. Improvements include better handicapped access, safety surfaces, drainage improvements, long term replacement of facilities as they wear out, etc. The Existing Parks Improvements Costs (Appendix B2) categorized the recommendations into high, medium and low priorities depending on the level of need for the improvements. Some low priority items included eventual replacement of playground equipment as it reaches the end of its useful life.
2. **Increased Maintenance and Staff** - The Public Works Department currently assigned to maintain the parks are understaffed and cannot accomplish the proper maintenance on active recreation areas as well as the many open spaces and natural areas. The maintenance team only has one mowing crew which is insufficient. They are unable to keep up with the landscaping, pruning, over-seeding, aerating, turf management, weed control, etc. To maintain the current park and recreation facilities in an adequate condition, the Consultant Team recommends adding three full time maintenance personnel resulting in a total of nine staff. The primary workload for this staff should be park maintenance. This increase in staff to maintain the existing parks, recreation facilities, and fields will result in a higher quality level of the facilities and proper turf and field maintenance will help the overused fields to be in better and safer condition as well as provide a better experience for users.

In addition, the Senior/Community Center is underutilized. If the Department had two full time maintenance staff working shifts seven days per week, the center could be open 12 to 15 hours per day, seven days per week for programming for all ages in the community.



There is a question as to whether maintenance and/or programming staff for indoor facilities can be paid from funds from the Trust Fund. If this is a concern, one possibility would be to shift Township general funds that currently go to Public Works staff that maintain parks to be funded from the Trust Fund and to shift the general funds to programming and interior maintenance staffing.

3. **Park Development** - Develop the parks and recreation areas to meet the current and projected needs as identified in the Recreation Needs Assessment. Most of the needs can be accomplished on current Township-owned property as indicated on the Concept Plans. More detailed Site Analyses and Master Plans will be required to further study the potential of these properties to meet the needs.
4. **Future Park Land** – Acquire approximately 200 acres for the future development of an additional Community Park. Current and near term needs can be accomplished on existing Township-owned lands, but future land will be needed as the community continues to grow. Targeted areas would be where future residential growth will occur. The general location is not indicated in this Plan as the location should consider the actual park development that takes place on current Township-owned land and future community growth patterns.
5. **North-South Connector Bike Path** - Develop the north south connector bike path of approximately 6.3 miles to connect Franklin Park, along South Middlebush Road through the Dunn-Gunther site, through Six Mile Run Reservoir land, into the Phil Marden Preserve, utilize the trail along Van Cleef Road, then through the Franklin Township Memorial Forest, and over to Colonial Park and to the D&R Canal.
6. **Nature Trails** - Additional nature trails in open spaces could be developed as part of volunteer efforts (Eagle Scouts, etc.).
7. **Farm Land Preservation** - Purchase the development rights on 75% of the targeted farms suggested by the Open Space Committee. Farm Land Preservation accomplishes the goal of reducing development and protecting the rural character of the Township versus outright purchase of the land which can result in additional operations costs to the Township. State and County funds are also available for this process. The Open Space Committee suggested accomplishing this over an eight year period. This could be lengthened if needed to accomplish other uses of the Trust Fund (An alternative would be to reduce the percentage of targeted farms from 75% to a smaller percent)
8. **Open Space Acquisition** – Target acquisition on the two current targeted properties and then on sites to accomplish the park and recreation goals of the Township. The Open Space Committee prefers to acquire farm land development rights over outright acquisition for the reasons cited above.

9. **Wards 4 & 5 Parks** - Acquire sites as available in Wards 4 and 5 to develop Mini-Parks and Neighborhood Parks in these more densely populated areas.
  
10. **Recreation and Wellness Center** – Partner with a non-profit or private organization to develop and operate a large recreation and wellness center. Such a facility should be located to allow easy access for all residents in the Township. A health partner may also be included to provide outpatient physical therapy and rehabilitation services. The Township could provide the land or site infrastructure as part of the partnership. The center should include approximately 60,000 to 70,000 square feet in a central location that should include the following:
  - a. Two full size game courts,
  - b. Elevated walking / running track,
  - c. Locker rooms (small – functional),
  - d. Multi-purpose community rooms,
  - e. Game room, youth and teen area,
  - f. Fitness area (cardio and free weights)
  - g. Aerobics, dance area (wood floor),
  - h. Indoor lap pool and family aquatic area.

Facilities of this type generally cost in the range of \$1.4 to \$1.6 million per year to operate and generate revenue to cover approximately 65% to 85% of the operating cost.

11. **Community/Senior Center Expansion** - An additional unmet need is the availability of a gym for current recreation programs and the unmet need for additional adult and youth athletic programs such as volleyball, basketball, wrestling, indoor soccer, etc. There is room behind the Community/Senior Center to build a single gym complex with restrooms to allow the Recreation Department to become less dependent on the Schools for gyms and for hosting programs at times when the schools are not available. A fitness and wellness component could be added to this facility if the above mentioned recreation and wellness center is not established. This addition would include larger restroom/locker rooms than for just the gym space, a wellness office, and about 3,000 square feet of fitness space as a minimum.

The development of this facility will require additional staff for maintenance and programming. Six additional staff at 25 hours per week at \$12 per hour will be required to properly operate and maintain this facility. It is estimated that this facility will require an additional \$94,000 per year for staff plus operational costs.

12. **Indoor Aquatic Facility** - In the event that a partnership is not developed for the community recreation center, there is still a strong need for indoor adult oriented fitness space and an indoor aquatic facility. The Township could develop and manage their own facility with these components. The fitness and wellness function could be added to the gym addition that was discussed previously or combined with an indoor aquatic facility that would be managed by the Township. This facility would include a 25 yard by six lane lap pool, warm water therapy pool, offices, and locker rooms. The Township should conduct a detailed feasibility study to evaluate the facility construction cost, operations costs, potential revenues, and an operating pro-forma before developing any indoor aquatic facility due to the potential for high operating costs. It is estimated that an indoor aquatic facility could require operational costs of over \$400,000 per year and a development cost of over \$4 million.
13. **Ranger Program** – A Ranger Program has been suggested to provide another level of security in the parks. Rangers serve as ambassadors for the Township and provide more eyes and ears in the parks than the police can typically provide. The Park Ranger is responsible for general patrol, visitor services, protection/management of natural resources, and public safety issues of these areas. It is estimated the staff for this addition will be in the range of \$160,000 per year for four full time Rangers plus the cost of autos, uniforms, etc.
14. **Historic Preservation** – Implement the three year stabilization recommendations and funding for ongoing support of the historic preservation efforts as outlined in Section VII.
15. **Project Financing** - This analysis looks at a 20 year horizon. The needs for funding presented in this report exceed the 20 year funding from the Trust Fund tax. To meet more immediate and short term needs, projects can be financed through bonds as has been done previously with the Trust Fund. The payments can extend beyond the 20 years. As long as the Trust Fund tax is in place.

### C. Action Plan and Time Line

The public opinion has clearly shifted since the creation of the Trust Fund. The Township, along with the County, State and Federal Governments have been successful in preserving 34% of the township land mass as open space. The Open Space Committee is shifting their recommendations from outright acquisition to purchase of development rights for farm land preservation. The Plan recommends the following expenditures of funds from the Trust Fund in the time frames listed below for consideration by Township Council.

1. **Short Term** – Immediate needs (0-2 years)
  - a. Increased maintenance staff for existing parks.

- b. Short term improvements to existing parks as outlined in the Qualitative Park Inventory.
  - c. Two open space acquisitions of targeted open space land.
  - d. Historic preservation immediate needs to prevent further deterioration of properties.
  - e. Continue Farm Land Preservation Plan.
  - f. Higher percentage dedicated for new park facilities development
    - (1) Develop the high priority new park improvements by:
      - Completing the next phase of Middlebush Park to serve the north half of the Township,
      - Develop the Franklin Park Natural Area (Catalpa) in the South.
    - (2) Develop small parks on current Township owned park land in Wards 4 and 5 at Willow Road, Arlington Park, Norris Road Park, and Hawthorne Park.
    - (3) Developer to complete Summerfield Park.
  - g. Planning for the North-South Connector Trail.
  - h. Reach out to potential partners (such as the YMCA) for the development of an indoor recreation and fitness center with an indoor pool. Continue this action item through other time frames until a partner is found.
  - i. Acquire land or easements for the Marconi Site Canal Bridge Access with historic markers.
  - j. Dunn-Gunther Park – Start the diversion application process if portions of these sites are to be developed for active recreation.
2. Mid-Short Term (3-5 years)
- a. Complete high priority, and start medium priority improvements to existing parks.
  - b. Continue increased maintenance staff.
  - c. New Park Development
    - (1) Complete Middlebush Park.

- (2) New facilities development at one or two sites in the central part of the Township requiring approximately 110 to 120 total acres of developed area. Ideally the park site(s) would also include an equal amount of passive/natural area to provide a balance and provide opportunities for nature education.
    - Outdoor Family Aquatic Center
    - Amphitheater
    - Large all-access playground
    - Four-field baseball-softball complex
    - Three picnic shelters for 50-75 people each
    - Six soccer/rectangular multi-purpose fields
  - d. Community Center Gymnasium and Fitness Addition.
  - e. Upgrade the Middle School Athletic Field complex in cooperation with the School Board.
  - f. Increase maintenance staff to coincide with the new park development.
  - g. Complete the three-year stabilization and priority historic preservation improvements. Continue ongoing support of the historic preservation efforts.
  - h. Continue Farm Land Preservation Plan.
3. Medium Term (6-10 years)
- a. Complete lower priority improvements to existing parks.
  - b. Continue increased maintenance staff.
  - c. New Park and Facility Development.
    - (1) Purchase additional land and develop small parks in Wards 4 and 5.
    - (2) Develop a Community Park with athletic complex in the south-central part of the Township. The park should include:
      - Approximately 65 to 75 acres of developed area
      - Four-field youth baseball and softball complex with one field large enough for adult and senior softball

- 4-7 soccer/rectangular multi-purpose fields
  - Large baseball field for adults and 16 and over year old players
  - Playground
  - Picnic shelters
  - Basketball Courts
  - Walking trails
  - Other support facilities
- d. Develop the Hamilton Street Business District Park.
- e. Form a partnership for the development of the Fitness and Recreation Center if not yet established.
- f. Continue farm land preservation process of targeted farms.
- g. Continue progress on historic preservation priorities, and ongoing support.
- h. Completion of the North-South Connector Bike Trail.
4. Long Term (11-20 years)
- a. Acquisition of land and development of a future Community Park in growth areas of the Township.
  - b. Complete additional small parks in Wards 4 and 5.
  - c. Develop an indoor swimming facility if a partnership is not formed for the Fitness and Recreation Center with an indoor swimming pool.
  - d. Complete farm land purchase of development rights.
  - e. Complete ongoing support for historic preservation.

**Table 18: Potential Allocation of the Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund**

		Current or Annual	20 year total	
a	Unexpended tax revenues from prior years	\$16,400,024		
b	2002 Bond fund unused balance	\$2,492,040		
c	2007 Bond fund unused balance	\$339,298		
d	<b>Current balance available</b>	<b>\$19,231,362</b>		
e	Land contracts signed	(\$4,386,000)		
f	Approved recreation spending	(\$1,525,000)		Middlebush Park and Little League lights
g	<b>Curent total available for consideration</b>	<b>\$13,320,362</b>	<b>\$13,320,362</b>	
h	<b>Future Annual Income and Expenses</b>			
i	<b>Income</b>			
j	Anticipated Annual Tax Revenue	\$ 4,734,500	<b>\$94,690,000</b>	plus inflation
k	<b>Expenses</b>			
l	Trust Fund operations costs	\$ (300,000)	(\$6,000,000)	
				Open Space and Historic Pres Consultants, surveys, appraisals, permitting, etc.
m	Bond payments (payments through 2022)		(\$31,148,456)	
n	<b>Total Expenditures</b>		<b>(\$37,148,456)</b>	
o	<b>Total 20 Year Funding Available for Consideration</b>	Lines g+j+n	<b>\$70,861,906</b>	plus inflation
p	<b>Potential Fund Uses</b>			
q	Open Space Acquisition <sup>1</sup>	Open Space Committee Targeted properties	\$680,000	
r	Open Space Acquisition <sup>1</sup>	Land needed for future park development		
		4-5 acres for Mini-parks in Wards 4 and 5	\$1,500,000	
		200 acres of future additional Community Park land	\$10,000,000	
s	Protection of 75% of the targeted farms <sup>1</sup>	Assumes 40% of cost from County and SADC	\$16,856,000	
t	Historic Preservation <sup>2</sup>	Three year stabilization	\$751,000	
		Annual budgets	\$3,200,000	
u	Improvements to Existing Parks to meet safety and access standards		\$1,922,400	
v	New Park and Recreation Facilities Development <sup>3</sup>		\$40,058,988	plus inflation
w	Upgraded Parks, Recreation Facilities & Trails Operations/Maintenance & Security <sup>4</sup>	\$ 400,000	\$8,000,000	plus inflation
x	New Parks, Recreation Facilities, & Trails Operations/Maintenance <sup>5</sup>	\$ 160,000	\$14,507,000	plus inflation
y	Park Ranger Program <sup>6</sup>		\$3,200,000	
z	Trail Development	North-South Bike Trail - 6.3 miles (includes permeable paving path, contingency, design, permitting)	\$2,000,000	
	<b>Total Potential Expenditure of Funds for All Purposes</b>		<b>\$102,675,388</b>	

Notes:

- 1 From the Trust Fund Summary provided by the Open Space Advisory Committee, October, 2011.
- 2 Based upon the recommendations identified by the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission and McCabe and McCabe, Historic Preservation Consultants, which are included in Section VII.
- 3 From Table 17: Capital Facilities Summary
- 4 Increase in Maintenance Staff by 3 full time field staff and 2 Community/Rec Center staff with additional \$50,000 for supplies per year.
- 5 Cost increase to properly maintain the new proposed park acres and facilities. Assumes phasing in increased costs as facilities are developed.
- 6 Start a Park Ranger program withn 4 full time rangers plus vehicles.
- 7 Grants should be used whenever possible to reduce Township spending.

**Table 19: Sum of Recommended Park and Recreation Additions**

Park	New Developed Park Acres				New Facilities								
	Mini-Parks	Neighborhood Parks	Community Parks	County Parks	Rectangle Fields (Soccer /Football /Lacrosse)	Baseball / Softball Fields	Cricket Pitches	Basketball Courts	Picnic Shelters	Play grounds	Tennis Courts	Indoor Gym	Outdoor Aquatic Center
Middlebush Park Additions			40		3	1		2	2				
South Central Community Park			65		7	5			1	1			
Central Township Community Park (s)			110		6	4			4	2			1
Franklin Park - Catalpa			100		2		2	1	2	1	2		
Summerfield Park		8.5			1	1		1		1			
Arlington Park	0.5							0.5	1	1			
Norris Road Park	1							1		1			
Willow Road Park		6						1		1			
Hawthorne Park	3							1		1	2		
Community Center Gym Addition												1	
Upgrade Middle School													
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>Colonial Park Additions (Somerset County Parks)</b> (Helps the supply in Franklin, but are not restricted to Franklin residents)													
Mettler				31	2	2							
Howe				34	2		1						
<b>Total with County Parks</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>Deficit from the Level of Service (LOS) Guidelines - Recommended by 2025 (See Tables 13 and 14)</b>													
<b>LOS Guidelines Deficit</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13 soccer &amp; 4 football</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

Note: The amount of facilities included in the "New Facilities" category exceeds the 2025 LOS Guidelines in some cases. It should be understood that all of the facilities shown on the concept plans might not be able to be developed due to permitting or regulatory constraints.



**Table 20: New Parks Operations and Maintenance Costs**

Potential increase in operations and maintenance costs for the new parks that are planned over the first 10 years of the program.

Year <sup>1</sup>	New Park	Acres	Operations at \$2000 per acre/year <sup>2</sup>	Total Increase through 20 years
2	Middlebush Park	20	\$40,000	\$720,000
	Catalpa	100	\$200,000	\$3,400,000
	Summerfield Park	8.5	\$17,000	\$289,000
3	Wards 4-5 parks	10.5	\$21,000	\$336,000
4	Central Township Parks	110	\$220,000	\$3,300,000
5	Gym and Fitness Addition		\$300,000	\$4,200,000
	Complete Middlebush Park	20	\$40,000	\$560,000
7	South Central Community Park	65	\$130,000	\$1,690,000
8	Hamilton Street Park	0.5	\$1,000	\$12,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>334.5</b>		<b>\$14,507,000</b>

## Notes:

- 1 Projected development year based upon the Action Plan. Year may vary based upon funding.
- 2 \$2,000 per acre per year is a general benchmark based upon several communities' actual costs.

- IX. Appendices (Under separate cover)**
  - A. Previous Report Summaries**
  - B1. Qualitative Park Assessments**
  - B2. Existing parks Improvements Costs**
  - C. Public Input Summaries**
  - D. Community Attitude and Interest Survey**
  - E. Web Survey Results**
  - F. New Jersey Benchmarking Tables**

