

Harris Township Parks Plan

May 10, 2021

This plan is the official Harris Township Parks Plan. The plan provides information on the Township's eight parks and its parkland dedication ordinance. It also outlines future needs. The plan will be used by the Township's Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and the Board of Supervisors to direct future park and recreation improvements.

BACKGROUND

Harris Township was established in 1835, combining pieces of Ferguson, Spring, and Potter Townships (Centre County Historical Society, 2011). The communities of Boalsburg¹ and Centre Hall were founded in 1809 and 1847, respectively. These small communities faced little pressure from development, until the growth of the nearby Pennsylvania State University in the 1960s. As the University and associated technological industries grew, the Township became a desirable bedroom community for the region.

GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

Harris Township is a Second Class Township within Centre County, Pennsylvania. The Township is governed by five elected supervisors and operates under the guidance of the Second Class Township Code of 1933 (reenacted 1995). The Supervisors appoint a variety of officers and advisory boards to help guide governance of the Township. The Township is a member of the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG), a six member agency that provides regional planning, code enforcement, refuse and recycling and parks and recreation services. The Township is also a part of the State College Area School District.

GEOGRAPHY

Harris Township lies to the southeast of Nittany Mountain, occupying the area between Nittany and Penns Valley and extending southeast across Tussey Mountain and into Rothrock State Forest. It is bordered to the north by College Township, to the east by Potter Township, and to the west by Ferguson Township. All of these lie within Centre County. College and Ferguson Townships are part of the Centre Region Council of Governments. To the south, the Township is bordered by Jackson Township, Huntingdon County.

Spring Creek has its origin in the Township and drains to the west. Major tributaries within the Township include Roaring Run, Galbraith Gap Run, Mackeys Run and Cedar Run.

¹ Originally designated Springfield and renamed Boalsburg in 1820 after one of the town's founding families.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2010 Census, Harris Township has 4,873 residents and 2,148 households. The median age is 43.6 and there are 1,244 children under the age of 18 living in the Township.

PUBLIC RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Harris Township is home to 9,700 acres of Rothrock State Forest. The forest has an extensive trail system which is heavily utilized.

In addition to the forest, the Pennsylvania Military Museum is also located in the Township. The museum includes 50 acres of green space, which are used for running, walking, biking and other recreational activities by residents. The land is owned and maintained by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Township owns 8 parks, accounting for a total of 81 acres of parkland. The Township has three community parks (Blue Spring Park, Yoder Preserve and Fasick Park) and four neighborhood parks (Nittany View, Country Place, Kaywood and Harpster Parks). The Township's newest park, Tussey Pond Park, is undeveloped at this time. Plans call for it to become a community park. The parks are maintained for the Township by Centre Region Parks and Recreation, an agency of the Centre Region Council of Governments.

In addition to its own parks, the Township is also home to two regional parks - Hess Field, a regional softball complex with 21 acres, and Oak Hall Regional Park, a park developed with softball fields and walking trails, with 68 acres, 5 of which are in Harris Township. Both facilities are owned and maintained by the Centre Region Council of Governments.

CURRENT REGULATIONS

Harris Township has a parkland ordinance. The ordinance requires that any development over 5 dwelling units within a residential zoning district contain 5 acres of parkland per 100 dwelling units (.05 acres per dwelling unit). The developer may also choose to pay a fee in lieu of donating parkland. That fee is currently set at \$2,250 per dwelling unit.

Under the Township's current parkland ordinance, pedestrian and bicycle paths can also be dedicated as parkland, provided the minimum right of way width is 20 feet and they meet the current standard for shared use paths set by AASHTO. Linear trails can also be accepted, if they connect to existing trails identified by the Centre Regional Planning Commission, or if they are adjacent to Cedar Run, Spring Creek, Slab Cabin Run, Roaring Run or Galbraith Gap. The trail shall have an average width of at least 75 feet.

Land offered for dedication must meet the following criteria: the majority of it shall be accessible to public water, sewer and electric; the land shall be accessible from a public street or shall adjoin and become part of an existing park area. Steep slopes, floodplains, drainage ways and stormwater basins cannot be dedicated as parkland.

PARKLAND REQUIREMENTS

The National Recreation and Parks Association has established parkland guidelines for municipalities. The chart below outlines the guidelines and how Harris Township compares to these standards.

Park Type	NRPA Guideline (used to forecast developed parkland requirements based on 2010 population)	Harris Township Parkland Inventory, 2021
Total Parkland	51 acres/4,873 residents <i>(up to 10.5 acres/1,000 residents)</i>	81 acres available across 8 municipally-owned parks
Neighborhood Parks	6-12 acres/4,873 residents <i>(1.25-2.5 acres/1,000 residents)</i>	27 acres (Nittany View, Country Place, Kaywood and Harpster Parks)
Community Parks	24-38 acres/4,873 residents <i>(5-8 acres/1,000 residents)</i>	41 acres (Blue Spring, Yoder Preserve and Fasick Park) *13 additional acres will be added once Tussey Pond Park comes online.

PARK MAINTENANCE

Harris Township's parks are maintained by the Centre Region Parks and Recreation (CRPR) agency, as part of the Township's participation in the COG. CRPR maintains any park that is 4 acres or larger. The Township does not own any parks that are less than 4 acres in size.

CRPR provides routine maintenance, including mowing, trash removal, apparatus painting and minor repairs, fencing, hard court maintenance and landscaping services. The Township is responsible for all capital improvements to its parks and for park development activities. Grant funds and developer contributions have historically been sought to help offset these costs.

FUNDING

Harris Township funds its parks in a variety of ways. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee typically receives a yearly allocation from the Township's General Fund. This money is used to address issues within our parks, including the purchase of small pieces of equipment and site amenities.

The Township also has the ability to use its Special Projects dedicated millage to set aside funds for larger pieces of equipment and matches for grants.

In addition to the General Fund allocation, the Township also relies on contributions from developers to fund its parks. Per the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) and the Township's parkland dedication ordinance, developers may opt to contribute a fee in lieu of dedicating land. The current fee in lieu of parkland is set at \$2,250 per unit. The Township does not have to accept this fee if it feels there is a greater need for parkland.

Per the MPC, fee in lieu funds are to be spent to provide park or recreation facilities that are reasonably accessible to the new development. The funds must be deposited into an interest bearing account.

In addition to fee in lieu funds, the Township has used Small Communities grants from Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to redo the playgrounds in Blue Spring, Kaywood, Fasick and Nittany View parks.

PARK INVENTORY

The Township is home to eight parks. This section will provide information on each park, including amenities within each and capital improvements planned for the next 5 years.

BLUE SPRING PARK

Blue Spring Park was dedicated to Harris Township on July 23, 1959 by Harold and Evelyn Wagner. The 8 acres park is located along Wagner Street, on the former Wagner Farm. Blue Spring runs through the edge of the park.

Blue Spring Park is a community park. It is located on the edge of the Village of Boalsburg and is home to numerous soccer and baseball games each summer. It also serves as the starting point for the Memorial Day Race, a 5K run, at the start of the Township's annual Memorial Day festival. A seasonal ice rink is also located in the park. The rink is erected by Centre Region Parks and Recreation and maintained by volunteers from the Boalsburg Village Conservancy.

The park received an upgrade to its facilities in 2008, courtesy of a Small Communities Grant from DCNR. The \$60,000 grant funded the purchase of a piece of climbing equipment, as well as the installation of ADA-accessible walking paths and a drinking fountain.

Current Inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Slide	2005	

Swing Set		
Picnic Pavilion		Available for rental through CRPR
Field		Used for soccer/lacrosse
Baseball Field (youth)		
Playweb	2008	DCNR grant
Basketball Court		
Wooden Recycling Bins	2006	Eagle Scout project
Doggie Pots		
Ice Rink		Maintained by Boalsburg Village Conservancy; insured by Harris Township
Water Fountain	2008	DCNR grant

Capital Needs:

Blue Spring Park was upgraded in 2008. A new roof will be needed on the picnic pavilion very soon. A new backstop on the baseball field will also be needed in the near future.

NITTANY VIEW PARK

Nittany View Park is located in the Hill neighborhood. The 9 acres tract contains a field that is heavily utilized each spring and fall for lacrosse. The park also contains a picnic pavilion and playground equipment.

The Township received funding from DCNR to rehab this park in 2019. Work is expected to include the installation of new playground equipment and upgrades to the pedestrian path.

Current inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Field		Used for soccer/lacrosse
Pavilion		Available for rental from CRPR
Play Equipment	2005	

Water Fountain		
Gravel Walking Path		
Bleachers		
Shade Trees on Path	2007	Eagle Scout project
Wooden Recycling Bins	2006	Eagle Scout project
Stone Planter		Donated by the Harris Township Lions Club
Benches		

Capital Needs:

Nittany View Park will be rehabbed in 2021, using funds from DCNR. A new playground and additional paths will be installed in the park.

KAYWOOD PARK

Located inside the Kaywood development, Kaywood Park is a neighborhood park. The land for the 10 acres park was dedicated to Harris Township by Fred Homan.

The park itself was conceived of by the residents of the development, who gathered each Fourth of July for a block party and parade. Out of this gathering grew pie contests, bake sales and other events geared at raising funds for a future park.

In 1969, the local Girl Scout Troop approached the Township and asked that the open space inside the development be turned into a park. The Township agreed and donated funds toward the development of the park. Funds from the Fourth of July festivities were used to purchase trees and swings. The park was largely developed through the help of the local Boy Scouts and the families in the neighborhood.

In 1977, a group of the American Society for Civil Engineers from Penn State constructed the stone picnic pavilion. The 112th Control Squadron of the Air National Guard supplied a crane to install the support beams for the structure. The park was dedicated to the Township on August 10, 1978.

Kaywood Park was upgraded in 2008, after the Township received funds from DCNR to install a new piece of playground equipment, ADA-accessible walking paths and a drinking fountain. The roof on the stone picnic pavilion was redone in 2006 as part of a Day of Caring volunteer project.

Current Inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Stone Picnic Pavilion	1977	PSU Civil Engineering Students; roof redone in 2006
Picnic tables		
Benches at play area	2008	DCNR grant
Basketball court		
Playground Equipment	2008	DCNR grant
Wooden Recycling Bins	2009	Eagle Scout project
Walking Paths	2008	DCNR grant
Open Field		
Sledding Hill		
Perimeter Pathway/Trees	2020	Township installed the pathway; Eagle Scout planted trees

Capital Needs:

2.033 acres of parkland will be added to the park in 2021 as part of the Kaywood North project. This land will be added to the back of the park. Once added, the plan for the park should be revisited and the use of this additional acreage considered.

COUNTRY PLACE PARK

Country Place Park was dedicated to the Township on May 23, 1973 as part of the open space for the Country Place development. The park contains 4.1 acres and sits on land between Honeysuckle Drive and Homestead Lane. It is a neighborhood park, primarily serving the residents of the Country Place development.

The park is very underutilized and contains only a few amenities, including a unique metal slide and a limestone kiln. It also houses a half court basketball court.

Current Inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Swing Set		New swing set will be installed in 2021
Metal Slide		
Doggie Pot		
Limestone Kiln	Restored in 2010	Eagle Scout project
Picnic Table		
Basketball Court		Half court, hard surface
Benches		
Water Fountain		
Climber		

Capital Needs:

Country Place Park will be rehabbed over the next few years. The park was included in the master planning effort for Tussey Pond Park. The plans call for retrofitting the iconic slide to meet current safety standards, installing a picnic pavilion, a natural playground and trails. The plans also call for creating an interactive area near the stone iron furnace. A trail that will connect to Tussey Pond Park via Discovery Drive is also proposed.

EUGENE FASICK PARK

The two tracts of land that encompass Eugene Fasick Park were dedicated to the Township on May 23, 1979 as part of the open space requirement for the Willowbrook development. The park is named after one of the partners in the Willowbrook subdivision.

Fasick Park contains two tracts of land that are connected by a wooded trail. The Fasick Tot Lot is less than an acre in size and provides a small play area featuring a swing set and slide. The larger section of the park includes a youth baseball field, picnic pavilion and large piece of playground equipment. The park serves the Willowbrook, Centre Estates, Huntingdon Park and Elksview communities. It is connected via a bridge across Spring Creek. It is also located adjacent to Mountain View Country Club. The park totals 18.3 acres.

The Township received funds from DCNR in 2012 to replace playground equipment and install additional site amenities, including benches, a pathway and a drinking fountain.

In 2020, the Township used fee in lie funds from the Elksview developer to construct a boardwalk and a pedestrian footbridge. This project connects the park to Jacks Mill Drive between the Elksview and the Tussey Green Townhome communities.

Current Inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Slide	2005	Tot Lot
Picnic Tables		Tot Lot
Circle Bench		Eagle Scout project/Tot Lot
Swing Set	2008	Tot Lot
Climber		Tot Lot
Benches	2005	Main Park
Picnic Pavilion		Main Park/ Available for rental by CRPR
Baseball field (youth)		Main Park
Bleachers		Main Park
Basketball Court	Resurfaced, 2014	Main Park
Horseshoe Pit		Main Park
Play Equipment	2014	Main Park
Wooden Recycling Bin	2009	Eagle Scout project
Nature Trail/Signage	2008, 2019 redone	Eagle Scout project
Bocce Court		Donated by Harris Township Lions Club
Doggie Pots		
Pedestrian Bridge, Boardwalk and Walking Path	2020	Funded by Elksview Fee In Lieu monies

Capital Needs:

The main portion of the park was rehabbed in 2014, using grant money from DCNR. New playground equipment was installed, the basketball court was resurfaced, trails were added and the drinking fountains were replaced. A boardwalk, pedestrian bridge and walking path

were installed in 2020. The bridge provides a connection to the Elksview Community on Jacks Mill Drive.

In 2021, the Township will install a spinarama and several pieces of fitness equipment in the Tot Lot.

STAN YODER PRESERVE

Located along West Main Street, the Stan Yoder Preserve began as a community effort to save one of the last remaining wooded tracts of land adjacent to the Village of Boalsburg from development. The Stan Yoder Memorial Preserve Committee organized in early 2000. They used countless fundraisers, donations from hundreds of individuals, groups and businesses and grants from DCNR, the Centre County Community Foundation and DCED to purchase the 15 acres tract from GTW Associates in October 2001. The land was then dedicated to the Township for use as a public park.

The Preserve is named after Dr. Stan Yoder, a long time member of the Boalsburg community and former president of the Boalsburg Village Conservancy.

The preserve is a true hidden treasure. Forgoing traditional park development, the land is slowly being returned to its natural state. The master plan envisions a series of “rooms” within the Preserve that will spotlight unique natural features. A series of walking paths provides ready access to visitors interested in discovering the many plants, animals and birds that now call the Preserve home. The Township hopes to place a number of educational signs in the Preserve to provide information about the natural features, Preserve maintenance and Stan Yoder.

Current Inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Bird/Bat Habitat	2005	
Kiosk	2006	Needs to be redone
Benches		
Wooden Recycling Bins	2010	Eagle Scout project
Doggie Pots		
Picnic Table		

Capital Needs:

An amphitheater is planned for a section of the Preserve. Additional plantings and interpretive signage are also planned, per the master plan. A plan to address the invasive species in the Preserve is also needed.

HARPSTER PARK

This 4 acres park, located inside the Liberty Hill development, was dedicated to the Township on April 14, 2010. The park is named in honor of Russell and Edna Harpster, who owned the farm that the development sits on. The park primarily serves the Liberty Hill development, though it is accessible to the Hill neighborhood via a trail.

The park is planned to be very passive. A trail, plantings, benches and a pavilion are all planned. Development of the park began in 2011. The Township received \$20,000 from Traditions of the America, the developer of the Liberty Hill community, to offset development costs.

Current Inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Trail	2011	
Benches	2012	
Landscaping	2012	
Doggie Pot	2012	

Capital Needs:

In 2021, The Township plans to install a small gazebo in the park. Trails will also be added to connect to the internal trails within Liberty Hill. The Harpster family has indicated they would also like to fund the purchase of a flagpole for the park. The passive nature of the park should be re-evaluated periodically to ensure it is meeting the needs of the adjacent communities.

TUSSEY POND PARK

Tussey Pond Park is the Township's newest park. The park consists of two tracts of land, totaling 13.1 acres. The larger parcel totals 10.71 acres and includes a pond and wooded areas. The smaller parcel totals 2.429 acres and includes wooded and natural areas. The park was dedicated to the Township in 2014 to satisfy the parkland requirement for the Gates neighborhood.

The Township received funding in 2017 from DCNR to complete a master plan for the park. The Township worked with JMT from York, PA, to craft the plan. An eight person study committee, comprised of interested citizens, participated in the planning process. Key person interviews were also conducted with interested parties.

The master plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2018. The plan calls for the larger tract to have a natural playground, a boardwalk, a fishing pier and a trail system. The

smaller parcel will be used for trails and as a greenway connection to the larger parcel for residents of the Country Place and Gates developments.

The Township intends to apply for funding to start developing the parcel. In 2021, the Township hopes to install a path around the pond and several fishing piers.

The Diamond

Though technically not classified as a public park, the Diamond is a key piece of open space owned and maintained by the Township. Until now, the area has not been the responsibility of any of the Township's committees and instead has been cared for by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, Eagle Scouts and local volunteers.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee is proposing that the Diamond fall under their purview moving forward. They would be responsible for the plantings and for ensuring any needed capital improvements are taken care of.

Current Inventory:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Year Installed</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Planters	Redone 2020 and 2021	
Signs		
Christmas Tree	2013	

Capital Needs:

The plantings need to be removed and redone. The new plantings should be fairly low maintenance, as finding volunteers to weed and care for them through the summer is a concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Harris Township is fortunate to have ample recreational facilities in and around its borders. In addition to its proximity to Rothrock State Forest and the Pennsylvania Military Museum, the Township is also home to two regional parks - the Oak Hall Regional Park and Hess Field - and to 81 acres of municipally owned parkland.

The Township has benefited from its parkland ordinance, which requires that any development over 5 units within a residential zoning district contain 5 acres of parkland per 100 units (.05 acres per unit). The Township's inventory currently exceeds the National Recreation and Parks Association's guidelines for parkland.

Based on the information gathered in this Plan, the Harris Township Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee offers the following recommendations to the Board of Supervisors:

(1) Given that the Township currently exceeds the national guidelines for parkland per person, the Committee recommends that the Township thoroughly evaluate the need for more parkland before accepting additional land for dedication from developers.

(2) The Township has the opportunity to create recreational corridors by linking its parks together through bike and pedestrian pathways. The Official Map should be updated to identify these opportunities. Funding opportunities should be sought to complete these projects.

(3) The Board of Supervisors should consider using money from the Special Projects fund to fund matches for grants and parks projects. This would help to supplement the annual allocation the Committee receives and would enable the Committee to tackle capital projects in a timely fashion.

(4) The Committee urges the Board to use this plan in concert with an updated Official Map to direct future parks and recreation opportunities in the Township.