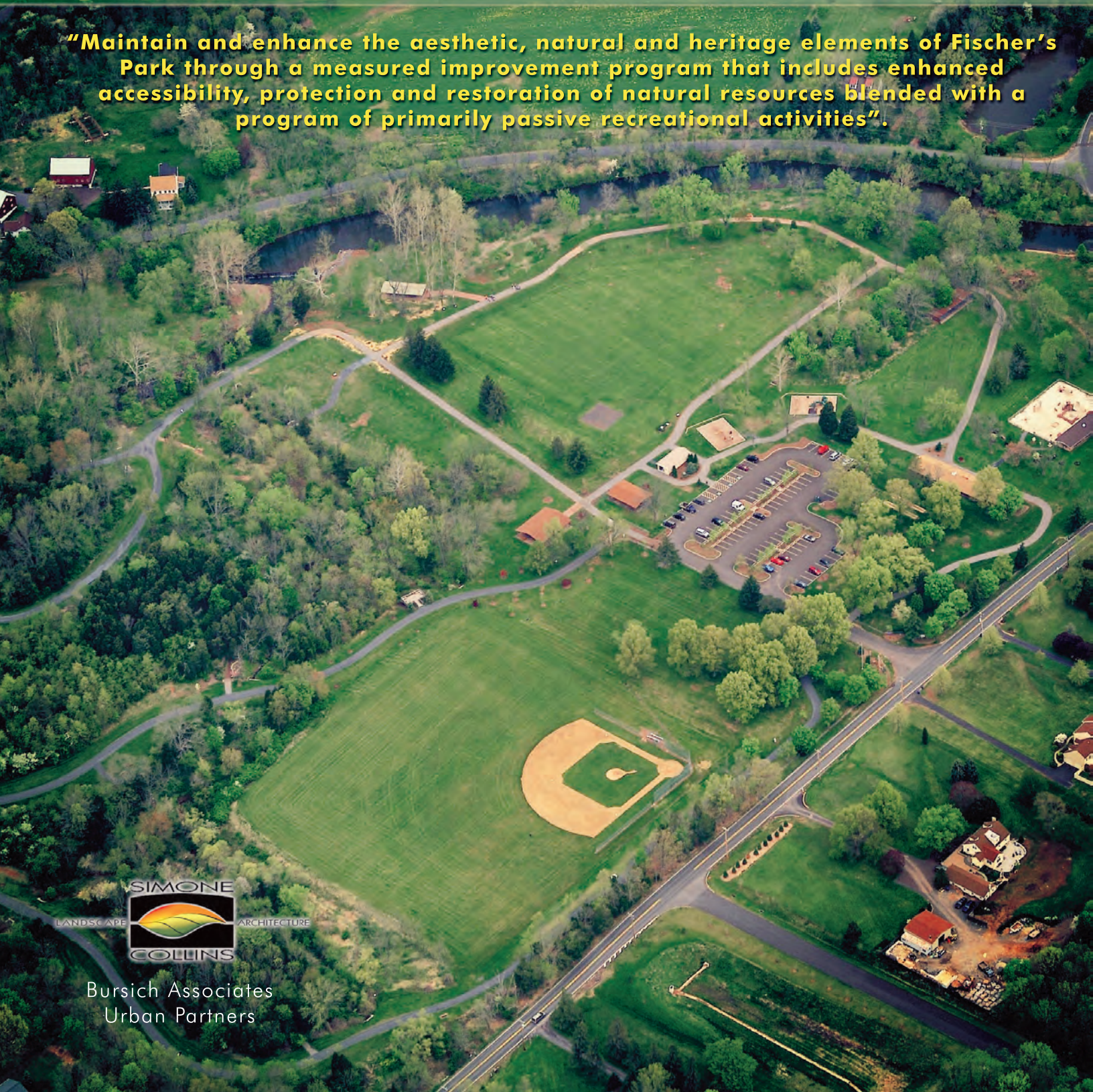


FISCHER'S PARK

Master Plan Update

Towamencin Township, Montgomery County

"Maintain and enhance the aesthetic, natural and heritage elements of Fischer's Park through a measured improvement program that includes enhanced accessibility, protection and restoration of natural resources blended with a program of primarily passive recreational activities".



Bursich Associates
Urban Partners

Fischer's Park Master Plan

Towamencin Township, Montgomery County

May 2010

Prepared by
Simone Collins



Bursich Associates
and
Urban Partners

Mission Statement:

“Maintain and enhance the aesthetic, natural and heritage elements of Fischer’s Park through a measured improvement program that includes enhanced accessibility, protection and restoration of natural resources blended with a program of primarily passive recreational activities”.

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

Fischer's Park is a 74-acre passive park located in the southern "pan-handle" section of Towamencin Township which is located in central Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. It is one of 12 parks in Towamencin, a growing community of nearly 18,000 residents. The Fisher's Park Master Plan Update contains a series of recommended improvements, which were guided by a dedicated committee of residents. The committee adopted a Fischer's Park Master Plan Mission Statement:

"Maintain and enhance the aesthetic, natural and heritage elements of Fischer's Park through a measured improvement program that includes enhanced accessibility, protection and restoration of natural resources blended with a program of primarily passive recreational activities".

This master plan report is divided into four sections that provide: 1) background information on the history and development of Fischer's Park, 2) an analysis of existing conditions and facilities, 3) alternative improvement concepts, and 4) proposed master plan, improvement phasing plan, and cost estimates.

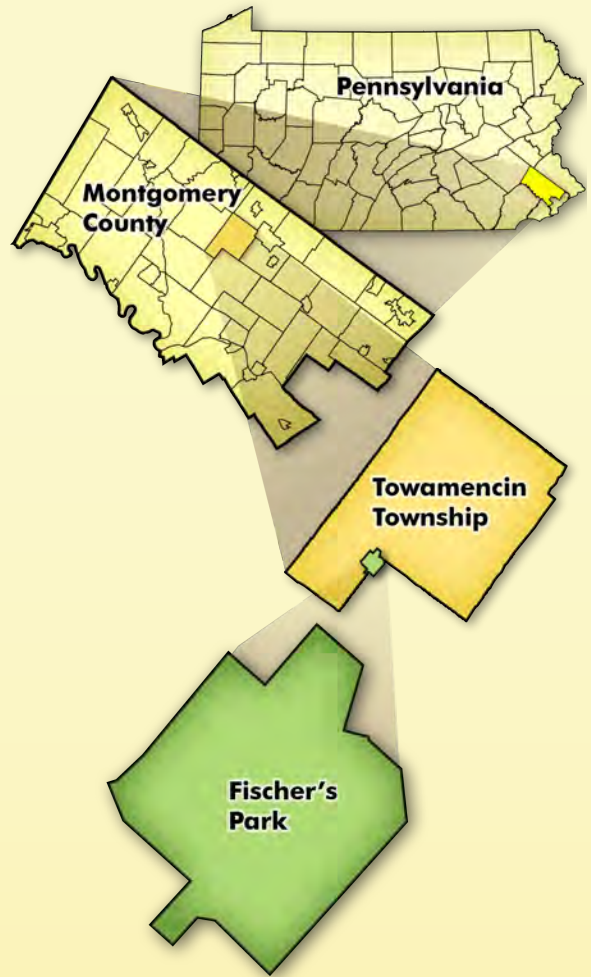


Bustard Pond Bridge

1.1 Location

Fischer’s Park is generally contained by Bustard, Springer, Kriebel, and Metz and Fry Roads. Bustard Road provides the eastern border, and Kriebel and Springer Roads are the park’s western border. Kriebel Road also cuts through the northern third of the park, paralleling Towamencin Creek. The southern edge of the park is confined by the rear yards of a handful of residences on Metz and Fry Roads. The park abuts Fry Road, where there is a gap in the line of residences, providing a service access. Primary vehicle access is taken from Bustard Road. The northern section of the park is bordered by residential lands.

Towamencin Creek flows east to west through the north central section of the site and effectively divides the park into a southern, heavily-used section, and a northern less-used section. Evansburg State Park is located approximately 1,200 feet to the west of Fischer’s Park.



1.2 History

A thorough history of Fischer's Park was developed for the 1998 Master Plan. This history includes a chronological timeline, which is shown on the next page. The following summarizes the park's history:

The lands that are now Fischer's Park were settled in the 1800s and contained a grist mill known as Kooker's Mill. Mr. Fischer purchased the mill, adjacent buildings, and 14 acres in the early 1900s. As early as the 1920s, the spot became popular with motorists who would picnic on the property. In the late 1920s, Mr. Fischer began adding facilities to accommodate visitors including a candy and ice cream pavilion, a boardwalk over the dam, cabanas, and a swimming pool.

Mr. Fisher was swept away during a flashflood in 1930 and his widow invited her nephew from Germany, Mr. Arneth, to continue to run the park. From the 1930s through the 1970s Mr. Arneth made several improvements to the property including the demolition of the mill, construction of the "upper club pool," filling of the mill raceway, and some additions to the houses.



Hugo and Helen Fischer



Kriebel Road / Arneth Farmstead

FISCHER'S PARK TIME LINE

- pre 1750 The mill and house (upper house) on the north side of Kriebel Road were built. The original dam is probably of similar date.
- 1850 Ruth Arneth sold five acres which included the old mill to David Fry.
- 1851 David Fry built the house (lower house), today known as the Arneth home.
- 1900? Mr.. Fischer purchased the house and mill with fourteen acres.
- 1920s Automobile travelers begin picnicking on the Fischer property.
- 1925 Mr.. Fischer builds a small pavilion to sell candy and ice cream.
- Late 1920's Mill operation ceases - not profitable. Slide erected on creek's edge, boardwalk over dam, several cabanas were built on piers.
- 1927 Construction started on swimming pool. Built with a hand crank cement mixer.
- 1928 July, the swimming pool is opened for public use (paid admission).
- 1931 Mr.. Fischer, crossing the creek on the foot bridge, was swept away in high water.
- 1932/3 The widowed Mrs.. Fischer asked her nephew from Germany to help run the park. Twenty-one year old Arneth arrived to help operate the park.
- 1930s Mill demolished.
- 1936 Dining room, powder room, and kitchen addition to Arneth Home.
- 1935/40 Mill Race filled.
- 1957 Porch addition to Arneth Home.
- 1960 Upper Club Pool built near Bustard Road.
- 1965/70 Mr.. Arneth purchased farmstead across Kriebel Road to ward off development of the land.
- 1975 Second story added to back of Arneth Home.
- 1980 Mr.. Arneth passed away.
- 1989 Towamencin Township acquired Fischer's Park. Several buildings were demolished and the pools filled.
- 1989 First Master plan for Fischer's Park. Township subsequently makes improvements to the park.
- 1992 Construction of parking area, restroom, nature trail and baseball field were completed.
- 1996 Towamencin Township acquires Arneth property.





Circa 1960

Towamencin Township purchased the 57-acre Fischer's Park Property south of Towamencin Creek in 1989. Many of the buildings, pavilions and pools were in disrepair and were demolished by the Township. The Township continued the use of the property as a park and constructed an enlarged parking area, restroom facility, nature trails, and baseball diamond in 1992. In 1996, the Township purchased the Arneith Farmstead on the north side of Towamencin Creek, which includes 23 acres, the former mill site, two houses, and two barns.

The Township commissioned the Fischer's Park Master Plan in 1998. The plan recommended the development of a number of facilities many of which were constructed and exist today. A number of other recommendations were not achieved due to cost and shifting priorities. Table 1 outlines which recommendations have been completed and which are still under consideration in this plan update.

The Township also constructed the Arneith Entertainment Center, which was not part of the 1998 Plan. The Center was built in 2006 and is a major attraction with its summer concert series, movie nights, and similar activities.

Table 1: 1998 Master Plan Recommendations Status

Recommendation	Description	Status
Parking (main lot)	The main parking lot will be located at the commons and will accommodate 100 paved spaces and 50+ overflow on stabilized turf	Complete
Picnic pavilions	Four new open picnic pavilions will be located around the central circular common green	Complete
Commons	Four pavilions (above), a gazebo and restrooms located around a central tree-lined lawn area.	Partially Complete (restroom has been installed)
Tot lot/play area	An environmental play area modeled on Towamencin Creek with water features and paths.	Partially complete. The tot lot and play areas were developed, but the environmental components were not.
Baseball field	Maintained as a baseball field.	Complete
Picnic grove	Additional picnic tables located adjacent to the pavilions.	Not developed
Play courts	Volleyball courts	Not developed
Signage	A map illustrating trails and features of the park should be located near the drop-off area/commons	Complete
Kriebel Road	Close Kriebel Road	Not developed
Farmstead	The farmstead recommendation included several components for parking, utilities, signage, a pedestrian court, reuse of the structures. Reuse options included a restaurant and conference center, equestrian center, bed and breakfast, classroom space, nature center, arts center, and others.	Not developed
Riparian buffer	Restore the riparian buffer along Towamencin Creek	Partially complete. A portion of the creek was stabilized
Pedestrian bridge	Install a pedestrian bridge across Towamencin Creek	Not developed
Nursery / Nature preserve	Develop a nature/horticultural center at the Metz/Fry Road entrance of the park	Complete. The horticultural center was never developed, but the native plant nursery exists.
Trails	Specifications for stone dust and asphalt trails were made	Complete

1998 Fischer's Park Master Plan

FISCHER'S PARK MASTER PLAN

Towamencin Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

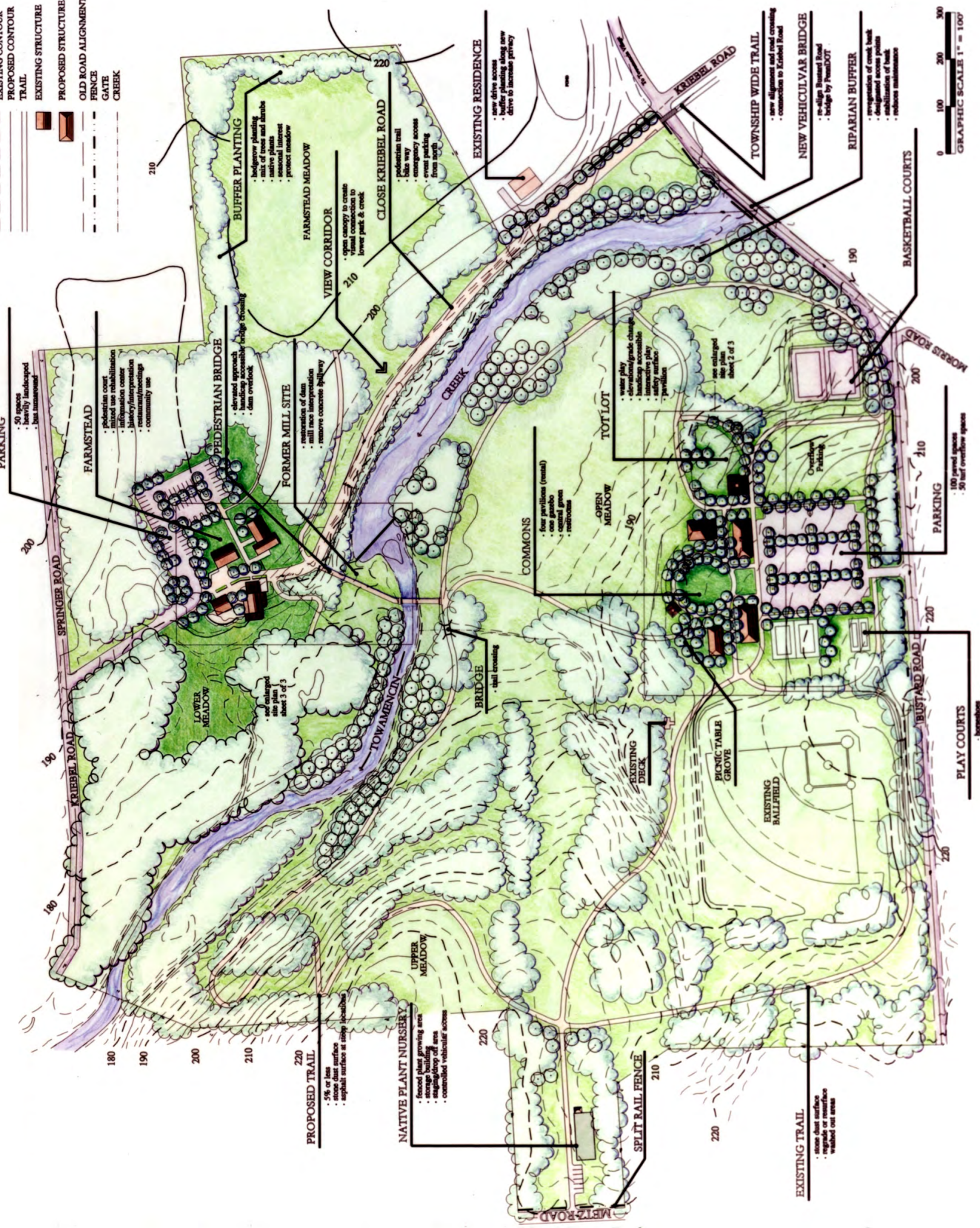


PROJECT: 9650
 DRAWN BY: DC
 ORDER#: 11/17/97
 DATE: 11/17/97
 SCALE: 1"=40'
 SHEET: 1 OF 3

SIMONE LAFFE COLLINS
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
 60189-0348 FAX: 610-897-7521

LEGEND

- EXISTING CONTOUR
- PROPOSED CONTOUR
- TRAIL
- EXISTING STRUCTURE
- PROPOSED STRUCTURE
- OLD ROAD ALIGNMENT
- FENCE
- GATE
- CRIBB



GRAPHIC SCALE 1" = 100'

1.3 Scope of Work

The Fischer's Park Master Plan Update was developed using a planning process and scope of work that comply with standards specified by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2). DCNR funded this master plan update in partnership with the Township.

The following five steps summarize the scope of work.

1. Programming – Programming determines what facilities and activities are needed in the park. The Open Space, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee as well as the Township Staff and local residents participated in the development of the program.
2. Community Meetings – A series of four community meetings were held during the work effort. Public comment was solicited and encouraged as part of the master planning process.
3. Site Analysis – The natural and man-made influences of the site were inventoried and analyzed.
4. Concept Design Options – The functional relationships for the desired uses were examined and preliminary design plans were developed.
5. Master Plan Design – Taking into consideration community comments and suggestions, a final plan, implementation phasing plan, recommendations, and cost estimates were prepared.

1.4 Planning Process

1.4.1 Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee

The Towamencin Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee guided the development of the Fischer’s Park Master Plan Update through the comments at four committee meetings and numerous emails and attendance at four public meetings. The committee is comprised of ten members including township residents, staff, and officials. Meetings were conducted by the project consultant team led by Simone Collins Landscape Architecture with support from Bursich Associates, engineers, and Urban Partners, market analysts. Agendas, minutes, handouts, and presentations for each meeting are included in the appendices of this plan. The focus of each meeting is summarized below.



Master Plan Committee meeting

1.4.2 Committee Meetings

- June 29 Committee Meeting # 1 Project kick-off and site work held at park. Confirm goals and objectives
- September 14 Committee Meeting # 2 – Review site design options
- November 9 Committee Meeting # 3 – Review draft plan
- January 11 Committee Meeting # 4 – Finalize Changes to the Draft Plan

1.4.3 Public Meetings

- July 14 Public Meeting # 1 – Present existing conditions and solicit ideas / get community feedback.
- October 19 Public Meeting # 2 – Present options for site improvements
- November 16 Public Meeting # 3 –Present Draft Plan
- February 24 Public Meeting # 4 – Final Plan Presentation to Board of Supervisors

Table 2: Survey Highlights

Top survey responses are presented below. See the appendix for full survey results.

Are you a resident of Towamencin Township?

Answer Options	Response Count
Yes	128

How frequently do you use the Fischer's Park?

Answer Options	Response Count
A few times a month	45

During which season(s) do you use the park (check all that apply)?

Answer Options	Response Count
All year	77

Which days do you use the park?

Answer Options	Response Count
All days	90

What time of day do you use the park (check all that apply)?

Answer Options	Response Count
Early evening	55

Why do you visit Fischer's Park (list all that apply)?

Answer Options	Response Count
Walk the dog	69
Get away	60
Walk the trails	110

What do you like best about Fischer's Park (check all that apply)?

Answer Options	Response Count
Trails	122
Towamencin Creek	97
Scenery	108

How many people are in your household and what are their ages?

Answer Options	Response Total
0 – 12 years	95
12 – 18 years	35
18 – 24 years	45
24 – 45 years	138
46 – 65 years	106
65 + years	19

Recognizing that organized sport leagues / teams are programmed for other Township Parks, and that Fischer's Park is to remain primarily a passive-use park, please check the top three potential improvements you would like to see for Fischer's Park.

Answer Options	Response Count
Pedestrian bridge over Towamencin Creek	83
Fitness stations	42
Improved tot lots	32
Other (please specify)	66

1.4.4 Survey

A survey was developed to better understand who uses the park, what amenities they like best and what additional needs are desired. The survey was posted on the Township website, emailed to park users, and distributed at the township building in the township's October newsletter. Over 130 responses were recorded and summarized to the left.

1.5 Planning Summary

Towamencin Township has developed a number of plans and studies in recent years that contribute to and support the Fischer's Park Master Plan Update. These documents are summarized as follows.

1.5.1 1998 Fischer's Park Master Plan

The 1998 Fischer's Park Master Plan provided an overall design and priorities for the park, including trails, picnic pavilions, and an overflow parking area, all of which have been developed. Recommendations that have not been addressed at the writing of this plan include:

- Play courts
- Pedestrian bridge across Towamencin creek
- A commons area
- Closing of Kriebel Road within the park
- Development of the Arneith farmstead

Each of these elements was further considered in this update.

1.5.2 Towamencin Township Park, Recreation, and Open Space Preservation Plan Update (Sept. 2006)

The Towamencin Park, Recreation, and Open Space Preservation Plan Update documents existing open space and recreation facilities in the township and makes recommendations for the preservation, improvement and expansion of those facilities. The plan provides three related trail recommendations that are relevant to Fischer's Park. The first is the development of an on-road trail on Kriebel Road running from Lower Salford to the west, through Fischer's

Park, and to residential areas further east. The plan also recommends developing trails connecting to and within Evansburg State Park. The Kriebel Road Trail would provide a portion of this connection. Finally, the plan recommends working with neighboring municipalities and the County on developing trail connections, which would include connecting Fischer's Park to Evansburg.

1.5.3 Township-Wide Trail Master Plan (Jan. 1996)

The Township-Wide Trail Master Plan provides for alternative, non-motor vehicle oriented transportation and recreation opportunities. The plan develops a series of system wide improvement priorities. Relevant improvements include cost estimates for an on-road trail along Kriebel Road connecting Fischer's Park to Evansburg State Park.

This improvement ties into a trail proposed by Evansburg State Park that would travel along the north side of Towamencin Creek between Kriebel and Old Forty Foot Road. The development of the state park trail is reported to be planned within the next five to six years, according to state park officials.