



Laurel Park Entrance Sign

Introduction

Laurel Park is part of an approximate 20 acre parcel located at the Solebury Township municipal building complex. The municipal complex includes the public works department and occupies approximately 3 acres of the site. The remaining park land has evolved as the primary recreation facility within Solebury Township and offers a variety of facilities which include: three little-league baseball fields, a softball field, tee ball field, soccer field, playground, concession stand and associated parking.

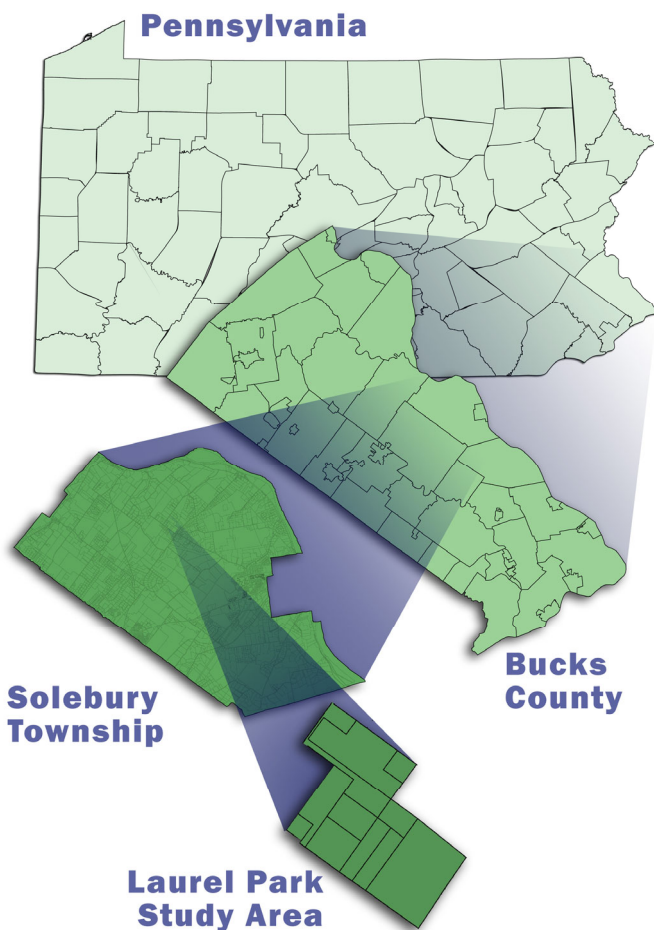
Access to the municipal complex is provided from two entrances on Sугan Road while a separate access to the park facilities is provided from a drive way off of Laurel Road. This access point is located on a small portion of land through the center of the park which is owned by the New-Hope Solebury School District. The township has an easement agreement in place for use of this School District property and one of the goals of the master plan process is to better integrate and share uses between the park and the adjacent New Hope Solebury School District Lower Elementary School.

Recognizing the need to accommodate future improvements at Laurel Park, Solebury Township recently acquired two residential properties for expanding the size of the park. The two parcels, each approximately 2 acres in size, are located along Sугan Road between the township municipal building complex and the adjacent Lower Elementary School. Additionally, the potential for increasing the size of the park is examined in this master plan by exploring the potential for future relocation of the public works facilities to a new location within Solebury Township.

Community Background Information

Regional Setting

Solebury Township is a 26.7 square mile municipality located in the central portion of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The township is bordered by Upper Makefield, Buckingham, and Plumstead Townships in Bucks County and by the Delaware River, which separates it from Hunterdon County, New Jersey. Solebury Township surrounds New Hope Borough, which is located along the Delaware River. U.S. Route 202 serves as a major north / south arterial roadway that roughly bisects the township. Due to the success of the township land preservation program, many portions of the township remain rural in character, however suburban development exists along the Route 202 corridor.



Introduction

Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Solebury Township had a total population of 7,743. The population under 18 years of age was 2,090 and the median age of the total population was 44.1 years of age. In comparison, the average median age of the four adjacent Bucks County municipalities was 39.4 years of age. Of the Solebury Township population over the age of 25, 54% of the population had achieved a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. The average household size in Solebury Township is 2.52, with a median household income of \$89,005. In 2000, the median household income in Bucks County was \$59,727.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) estimates that Solebury Township's population in 2005 will be 8,600. This represents an approximate 10% increase in population from the year 2000. By 2025, DVRPC projects Solebury Township to have a population of 13,020 – a 68% increase from the 2000 Census population.

Relevant Planning Documents

Comprehensive Plan

The Solebury Township Comprehensive Plan is an important land use tool used to analyze current development patterns and services in order to create goals for future development. Developed in 2000 and updated in 2002 the Solebury Township Comprehensive Plan offers a blueprint for sustaining the community character, resources, and quality of life. The plan recognizes the high levels of use at Laurel Park and recommends the establishment of an active maintenance program for the existing fields. Additionally, it is recommended that the township continue working relationships with community organizations and the New Hope – Solebury School District for jointly sponsored activities and programs.

Solebury Township Open Space Plan

Completed in 2000, the Open Space Plan sets goals for opens space preservation, provides guidance for the implementation of these goals, and the plan documents the successes of the existing open space program in Solebury Township. Of the 17,900 acres in Solebury Township, over 5000 acres enjoy some level of protection from further development.

Solebury Township Park & Recreation Plan, 2000

Adopted in 2000, the Park & Recreation Plan recommendations specific to Laurel Park include evaluation and repair of existing parking areas, field renovations, and planting additional landscape material.

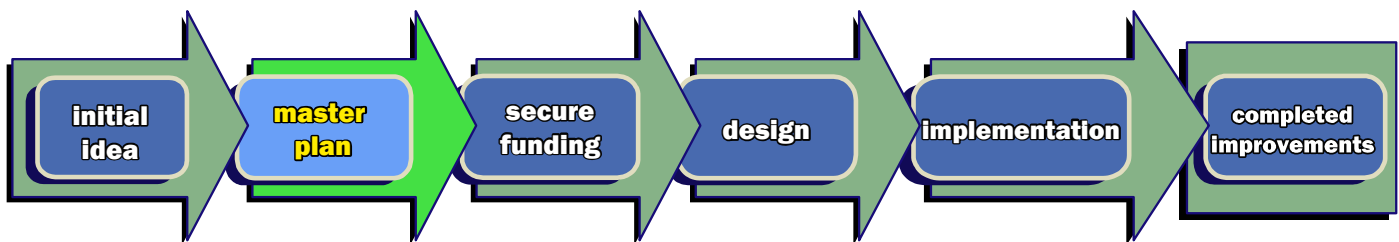
An update to the Park and Recreation Plan is currently under way and scheduled for completion in 2006. Recommendations specific to Laurel Road Park include accommodations for an additional 90' baseline ballfield needed to adequately serve the township. Additionally, the plan update identifies the need for an indoor basketball facility/community center however an exact location for this facility has not been determined. Possible locations noted in the Park and Recreation Plan Update include Laurel Park, a future township park location, or an alternate location yet to be determined.

Solebury Township Zoning and Subdivision and Land Ordinance

The Solebury Township Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance protect the health, safety, and welfare of the township residents. The zoning ordinance outlines permitted land uses within certain districts and establishes setbacks and building heights applicable to the development of Laurel Park. The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance generally deals with the specifics of required improvements and provides design standards for all types of development within the township.

Master Plan Process/ Public Participation

Public participation is a key ingredient in the success of any community project. Public meetings are designed to not only inform the public of the project status, but also to receive input as to the desired facilities and address any questions, comments, or concerns relative to the proposed improvements at Laurel Park.



As shown in the graphic above, the completion of the Master Plan is an early stage in the process of constructing new improvements and upgrading facilities at Laurel Park. The goal of the Master Plan study is to develop a general consensus for what facilities and improvements should be constructed and to establish an estimate of probable construction costs that can be used for developing an implementation strategy.

The Master Plan forms the basis of future design and engineering phases of the project when detailed design decisions are documented through the completion of construction drawings. Upon completion of these construction documents, the project can then be bid and constructed. It is important to consider that implementation of proposed improvements and upgrades will occur in phases over the coming years as project funding is available.

The twelve month master planning process began with a project kick off meeting with township staff. The planning process included three public meetings; the first of which was held on April 28th, 2005 at the New Hope – Solebury High School in the Steve Buck Auditorium. The focus of this meeting was site programming and attendees were encouraged to provide input relative to the facilities and improvements that they would like to see at Laurel Park. Public Meeting #2 was held on November 17, 2005 and the meeting featured the presentation of the DRAFT Laurel Park Master Plan. A two month draft plan public review period is scheduled prior to the final master plan presentation at the third Public Meeting which will be held in April 2006.

A total of five Steering Committee meetings were held throughout the Master Plan process. Attendance records and notes from all public meetings and steering committee meetings are included in the appendix of this report.

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