Solebury Township
202 Property Advisory Committee
Final Report
12/27/2023

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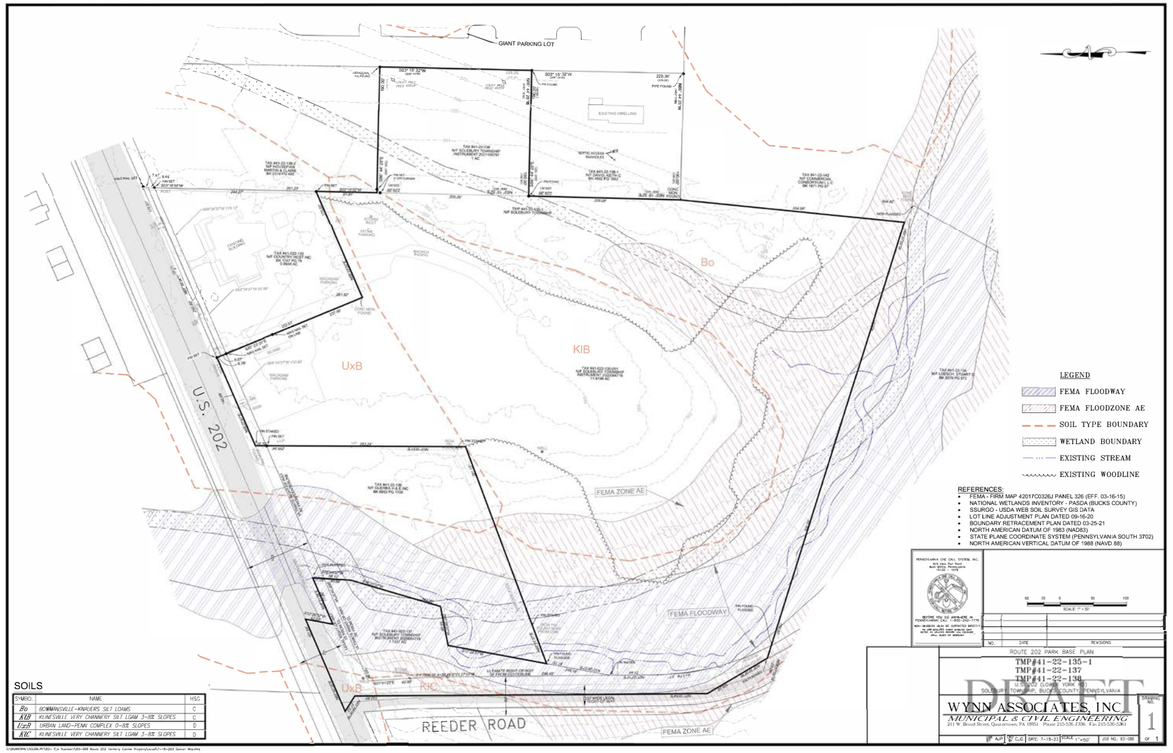
Property and Project Overview



Committee Charge

"The 202 Property Advisory Committee will hold meetings and guide decisions on the future use of the roughly 13-acre former flea market site at the intersection of Route 202 and Reeder Road. The committee, composed of volunteers and supported by professional staff, will operate much as the Aquetong Spring Advisory Committee did, shepherding the creation of Aquetong Spring Park through a lengthy series of community meetings and detailed research.

In creating the committee, the Board of Supervisors directed committee members to hew closely to the findings of the Township's 202 Property Survey. That survey of Solebury households asked residents to rank the importance of over a dozen proposed uses for the land. Nearly 28% of households, representing a third of the population, responded, showing a preference for *open space, active and passive recreational options*.

With the survey results as their guideposts, committee members will hold numerous public hearings, seek additional citizen input, rigorously examine the costs and environmental impact of proposals and make recommendations to the Board. Supervisors stress that, as with all significant Township projects, the committee's priorities should be thoroughness and transparency, not speed, in order to reach the best possible outcome."

202 Property Description

The 202 property is comprised of 3 tax parcels

#42-022-135-001	11.1340 acres
#41-22-138	1.00 acre
#41-022-137	1.1337 acre
Total	13.2267 gross acres
	12.9166 net (clear of the ultimate right-of-way)

The 202 Property Advisory Committee

The committee was comprised of ten community members with unique professional perspectives including: landscape architecture, environmental and graphic design, city planning, environmental planning, financial services, artist, library board member, and human resources expert.

There were 12 meetings held during 2023 with one group visit to the site with the Township engineer.

Committee Members

Peter Brussock, Vice Chair
Nancy Minich
Robert Chase Palmer
Kay Reiss
Joanne Reszka
Robin Seiz
Nancy Stock-Allen, Chair
Rickie Yudin
Per von Zelowitz
Barbara Zietchick

Supervisor Liaisons

Hanna Howe
Kevin Morrissey

Administrator

Erika Canterbury

Factors Shaping the 202 Property

Resolution No. 2019-106

TNC—Architectural standards

Physical Size
Wet & Dry Land
(*Wynn Associates 11.13.23*)

Area of woodlands=
6.1809 acres

Area of Wetlands=
0.5121 acres

Area of FEMA 100 year Zone
AE Floodway=
2.1751 acres

Area of FEMA 100 year Zone
AE Floodplain=
3.1799 acres

Public Survey

1. Passive
2. Farmers Market
3. Active Outdoor
4. Environmental center
5. Outdoor amphitheater
6. Community Garden
7. Dog Park
8. Community building
9. Sculpture Garden
10. Library
11. Children's play
12. Flea Market
13. Climbing walls
14. Skateboard Park
15. Gym

Solebury Parks Inventory

2 Passive
5 Active
2 Mixed Use

Vision Statement

1. Inclusive Design
2. Smart/Sustainable
3. Solebury Culture
4. Building community

Committee Research

Consultant Info

1.Wynn Assoc,
Engineering

2. McMahon/Traffic

3. Stern-Goldstein, Gilmore/
Overview planning

Committee Research

1. Park History
2. Local and Neighboring park inventory
3. Natural Playground
4. Sustainability Opportunities
5. Pavilions
6. Passive Parks
7. Parking/ impervious surfaces/ Traffic access
8. Community Gardens
9. Park Planning
10. Pop up events
11. Art in Parks
12. Master Planning Process

Simone Collins Site Evaluation
1/28/2020

Recommendations for Passive

- Trails
- Open space /native Grass meadows
- Reforested areas
- Horticultural gardens
- Plaza/sitting areas
- Looping trails
- Picnic tables
- Dog Park
- Connectivity trail
- Hiking trail to connect to Aquatong Spring Park via a woodland trail along the creek

202 Property Site visit
with the
Township Engineer

Recommendations for Active

Tennis
Basketball
Baseball
Football/Soccer

Miniature Golf

The committee voted unanimously to recommend developing the 202 property into a community park.

Solebury Township has a robust Park and Recreation Program that offers a wide range of activities in the following park configurations:

3 parks with playing fields, (Laurel, Livezey, Canal park)
2 undeveloped but designated active (North Point and Solebury Park)
2 passive (Aquetong Spring and Solebury Trail)
1 mixed use (Magill Hill)

The active parks are home to various sports fields which are heavily used by youth during the summer seasons, while the passive parks offer more year-round activities, such as walking or biking, for a wider age groups. Solebury holds two large tracts of land in the park system which have potentially been identified for recreational development but have remained as open space for over a decade. The committee felt that the 202 property would be best served by development for the following reasons:

Meeting the requests for more "non-sport" oriented parks

Solebury parks until quite recently have mostly supported youth sports. With the addition of Aquetong Spring Park, a passive preserve, we have seen an enthusiastic response from our community that confirms "if you build it they will come." In an on-site poll taken during a "Walk in the Park," 2022, at Aquetong Spring Park, many residents voiced strong interest in Solebury building additional non-sport related parks.

Addressing Suburban Isolation & Community Health

In the Township's 2022 public survey for use of the 202 property the highest number of responses requested passive/outdoor use as well as space for casual community-oriented activities. The committee recognizes the need for community building opportunities because Solebury's car-centric suburban setting lacks the traditional town settings that would naturally provide such opportunities ie. central greens or outdoor markets. This deficit could be addressed by converting the 202 property into a vibrant/nurturing park environment facilitating interpersonal contact and building residents' social cohesion and place attachment.

Another benefit would be in encouraging community-wide health. It is widely recognized that parks function as a critical resource to help combat an epidemic of anxiety that plagues our modern society, even in a small and affluent community such as ours. Medical experts* confirm the health benefits of providing **opportunities for informal and positive connections with fellow human beings as well as intimate interaction with nature.** Our recent experiences with Covid has also taught us the value of comfortable free outdoor meeting spaces.

Exploiting the Location

- The 202 property is located approximately at the center of the Township.
- The location, adjacent to the major shopping areas of the township, is an easy "add-on" to daily errands at nearby stores, dining at the adjacent restaurants, or walking the dog.
- The most densely populated communities, and likely most young families with children in the township, live nearby or directly across route 202. Living close to parks and other recreation facilities is consistently related to higher physical activity levels for both adults and youth.
- The property is positioned such that it could be a central hub between the east of the township, (Delaware River Canal Trail, Pat Livzey, Solebury Trail Park) and the west side (North Point Park, Aquetong Spring Park, and Solebury Park).
- With existing road noise from 202 combined with only a few private residences adjacent to the property, with careful planning there should be very little to no nuisance impact upon the existing neighbors.

*https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-the-wild-things-are/202307/the-importance-of-community

Vision Statement

To create a space that embraces the principles of inclusivity, demonstrates multi-use design, celebrates Solebury's cultural heritage, and creates opportunities for building community. These principles will be explored in partnership with the community and will use sustainable practices where practical and feasible.

4 Guiding Principles for a Future Park Design

1. Inclusive Design

The property will be designed:

- To consider a wide range of age groups
- To accommodate all abilities and is ADA accessible
- To consider cultures and lifestyles in our community
- To enhance the existing habitat and diverse landscape using sustainable practices
- To be pet-friendly

2. Smart/Sustainable Design

The property will be designed:

- To incorporate smart and sustainable features to allow for multi-use and multi-age participation.
- To enhance and protect the already existing diverse natural conditions.
- To encourage year-round usage

3. Solebury Culture

The property will be designed:

- To promote the River Township culture and become an important element in connecting the 202 trail between the Delaware River and Aquetong Spring Park
- To enhance the already existing art culture and heritage of Solebury by encouraging art expression on the property
- To support the "outdoor and nature" culture of Solebury as an integral part of the property
- To support the Solebury landscape by preserving and protecting natural space

4. Building Community

The property will be designed:

- To engage the community in the design and development through alliances with schools, non-profits, and other key stakeholders
- To encourage activity which promotes community interaction and fosters physical and mental well-being for the community
- To enhance and broadcast the Solebury experience by making the property inviting to visitors and possible new residents looking at joining our community.

1. Inclusive Design for Multi-generational & Diverse Populations

To consider a wide range of age groups
To accommodate all abilities and is ADA accessible
To consider cultures and lifestyles in our community
To enhance the existing habitat and diverse landscape using sustainable practices
To be pet-friendly

Intergenerational
Supply activities for all age groups

Differently-abled residents
Creatively integrate accessible offerings for residents with mobility, vision, audio and cognitive challenges

Affordable activity
Provide safe and cost free activities for all economic groups

Community Diversity
Develop activities for all cultures in our community. Youth with inclinations towards art or nature rather than sports, children who rarely have access to open fields or streams, teens who currently have to resort to parking lots or unwelcoming public spaces to congregate. Be mindful of cultural sensitivities.

Not only would it be economically and ecologically smart to use sustainable practices on this property, this park could act as a showcase for informing the community about their own home practices.

Design and build for 365-day year use.

2. Sustainability

The property will be designed:

To incorporate smart and sustainable features to allow for multi-use and multi-age participation.

To enhance and protect the already existing diverse natural conditions.

To encourage year-round usage

Dovetailing with Solebury's energy transition plan, it would be appropriate to include: use of **solar power** on the roof of pavilion, solar chargers on benches, and charging stations in the parking area so that visitors will have the added incentive of charging their EVs.

Buildings/Structures

Use permeable surfaces on parking and trail surfaces.

Low flow or compostable toilets

Landscaping

Plant native plants that are drought resistant

Minimize lawn mowing

Natural storm water management systems and other green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and swales with native grasses.

Respect to the environment such as riparian borders, water quality, and wildlife habitat.

Protect young trees from deer

Parking/ Trails

Develop community walking and biking connections through continued trail development.

3. Reflecting Solebury Culture / Agriculture & the Arts

The property will be designed:

- *To promote the River Township culture and become an important element in connecting the 202 trail between the Delaware River and Aquetong Spring Park*
- *To enhance the already existing art culture and heritage of Solebury by encouraging art expression on the property*
- *To support the "outdoor and nature" culture of Solebury as an integral part of the property*
- *To support the Solebury landscape by preserving and protecting natural space*

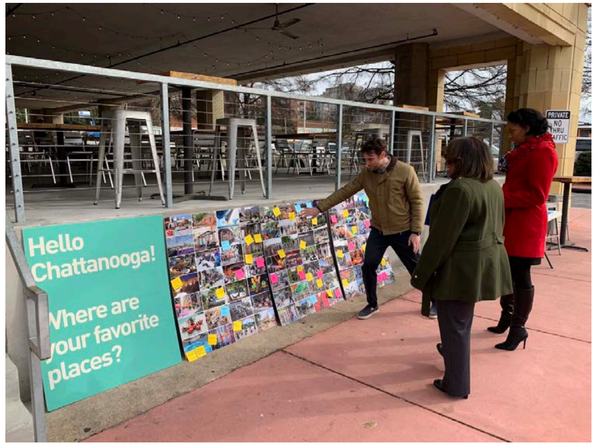
Agriculture

Solebury has a long history of farming and today is home to commercial scale as well as organic boutique ventures. Stone barns and homes evoke historical nostalgia and a rural coziness that attracts many tourists and gives residents a sense of place. In the 2022 Township 202 Property Survey the option for a Farmers Market on the site was popular but the Farm Committee was contacted and responded that they have explored the idea of a market and for various reasons found it not viable. However any tie-ins to the agricultural community should be explored. Pop-up farmers markets, seasonal produce displays, signage with maps to local farm markets, visual elements, etc.

The Arts

Many artists from 1900 until today have made Solebury their home. Park features that allow for temporary or permanent artistic expression — via painting, sculpture, writing, poetry, dance, photography, theater or music should be included; permanent or temporary installations of sculpture gardens or trails, in-ground mosaics, artistic birdhouses, writing workshops, sketching clubs/events, etc.

Hosting special events, such as art installations and performances, will also encourage repeat visits to the park.



Solicit input from entities such as Solebury Township's Environmental Advisory Group, the Park and Recreation Board, the Aquetong Watershed Association, and the New Hope Solebury School System, etc.

4. Building Community

The property will be designed:

- *To engage the community in the design and development through alliances with schools, non-profits, and other key stakeholders*
- *To encourage activity which promotes community interaction and fosters physical and mental well-being for the community*
- *To enhance and broadcast the Solebury experience by making the property inviting to visitors and possible new residents looking at joining our community.*

To increase community engagement in the design development a next stop for the Township could be to conduct a more **targeted survey approach** include finding representatives of several community organizations that are appropriate to advise on such a project.

Committee Suggested Park Elements

Trails
Multi-age play areas
Water access
Sculpture garden
Pavilion

Selected Elements

After weighing the responses of the community survey against the realities of the site the committee created a final list of 10 elements considered as appropriate.

ELEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Score
Trails	1	5		1		1			51
multiage play area	5		1				1		48
Water Access	1		1	2	1		1		30
Sculpture Garden			2		3	1		1	28
Pavilion	1			2	2				26
Plaza/Sitting Area		1		2			1		19
Community Event Space	1	1					1		17
Picnic Tables/Area			1		1	1			13
Horticultural Gardens		1				1	1		12
Open Space			1	1					11
Exercise Stations/Facilities			1						6
Native Meadows						2			6
Skateboard Park				1					5
Climbing Walls							1		2
Reforested Areas								1	1

Trails, multi-age play areas, water access, sculpture garden, and pavilion were chosen as the top five. It is also recognized that most of the lower scoring elements could be integrated into the top five elements.

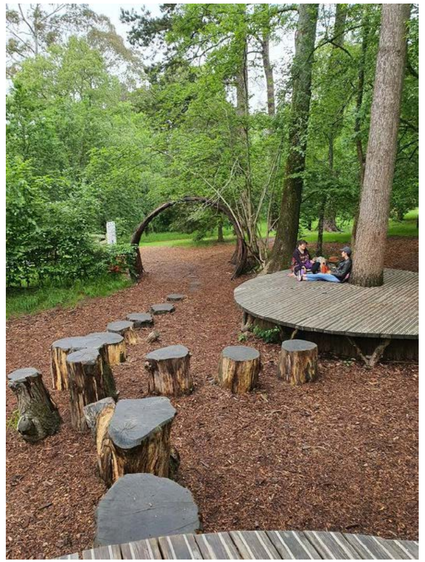
1. Trails

"**More trails**" has been the number one request by Solebury citizens over at least the past 10 years. They are a popular solution to creating facilities that can be used by all age groups, varying abilities if ADA compliant, and relatively easy to maintain once installed. In the 202 property trail considerations should:

- Include ADA segments to connect major features in the park
- Include mowed trails in meadows and grass areas
- Connections to other township trails as much as possible
- Possible locations for sculpture/art feature.

4. Sculpture Garden

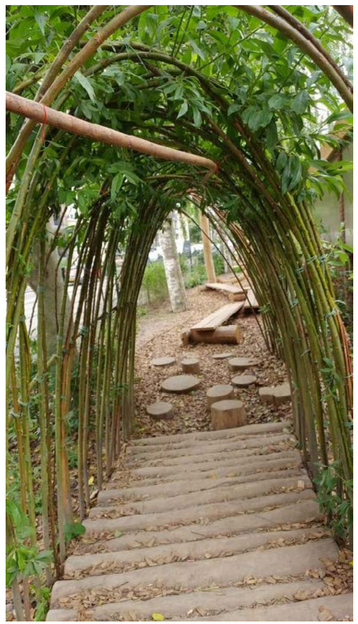
This should be considered as either a specific space or as enhancements along trails.



2. Multi-age play areas

While not every feature can span from toddlers to seniors, the committee advocates for creating features that can accommodate more than one age group.

- Visually creative and inventive
- Natural materials whenever possible
- Be attractive
- Inspire creative play



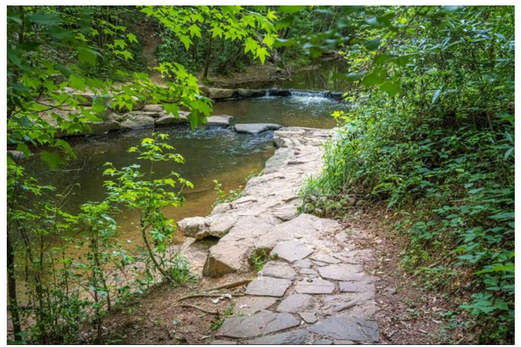
Solebury
a natural choice

Solebury "a natural choice" is the branding tag line used to by the Township.
"Natural" should be an organizing theme when designing the park.

3. Water Access

The Aquetong Creek, fed by the Aquetong Spring, is a clean and healthy source of water for our watershed. There is a natural attraction for people to want to connect to bodies of water, either by close proximity or actual entry into the water.

Keeping the integrity of the riparian border as paramount, finding ways to allow water access should be considered.



*"The recipe for unscripted constructive play starts with creating access to sand and water."**

**https://youthtoday.org/2021/07/natural-playgrounds-offer-restorative-play-for-pandemic-fatigued-children/*

5. Pavilion

The committee recommends a multi-use pavilion that can host picnics, small events, small classes and social groups, etc. The design could reference Solebury architecture and environment with elements such as stone and wood. Natural colors such as found in barns, covered bridge, etc. be used on more innovative structures.

Concept Sketches

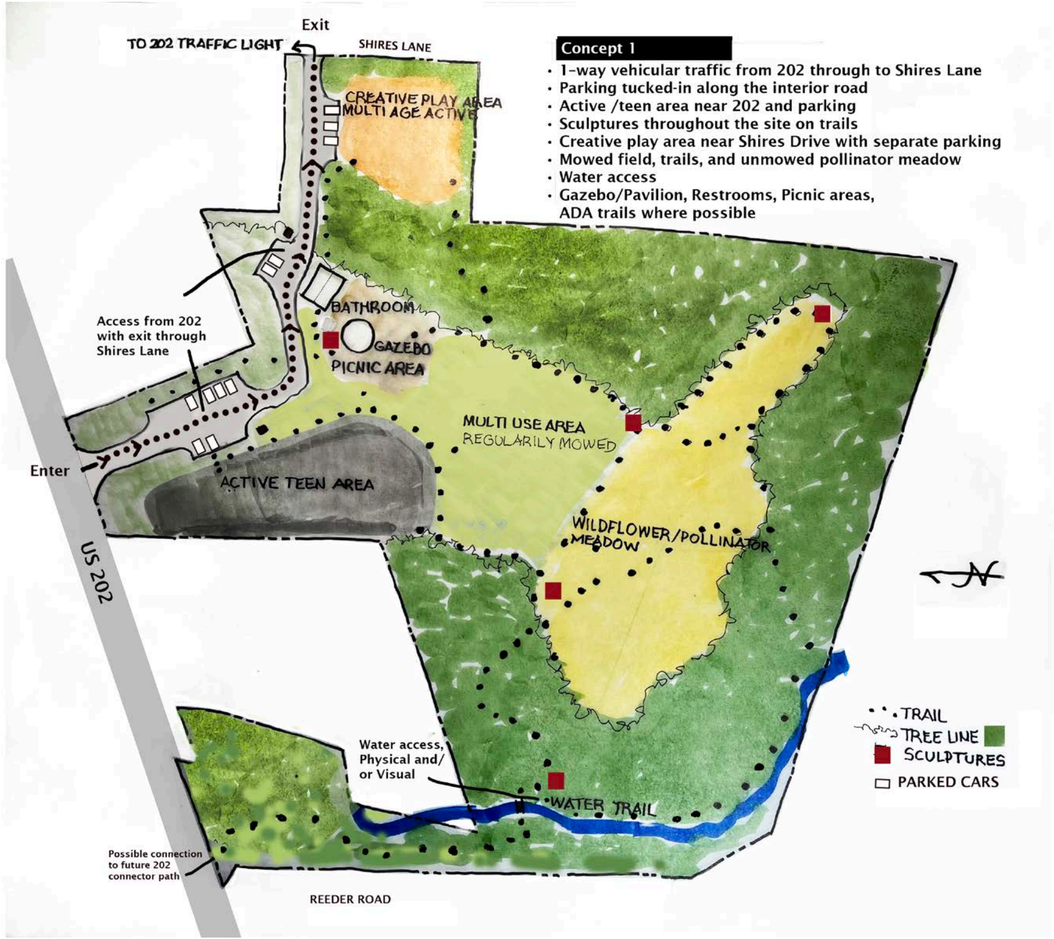
Two concepts were sketched to indicate some of the potential uses the committee can envision on the site. These are rough conceptual sketches meant only to convey the spirit of the park and not an absolute dictate of how the site should be used.

These can be used as a starting point for more informed conversations as the park project progresses through eventual consultants, designers, and a steering committee.

The concepts are based upon two different traffic flows, a critically important factor for the committee:

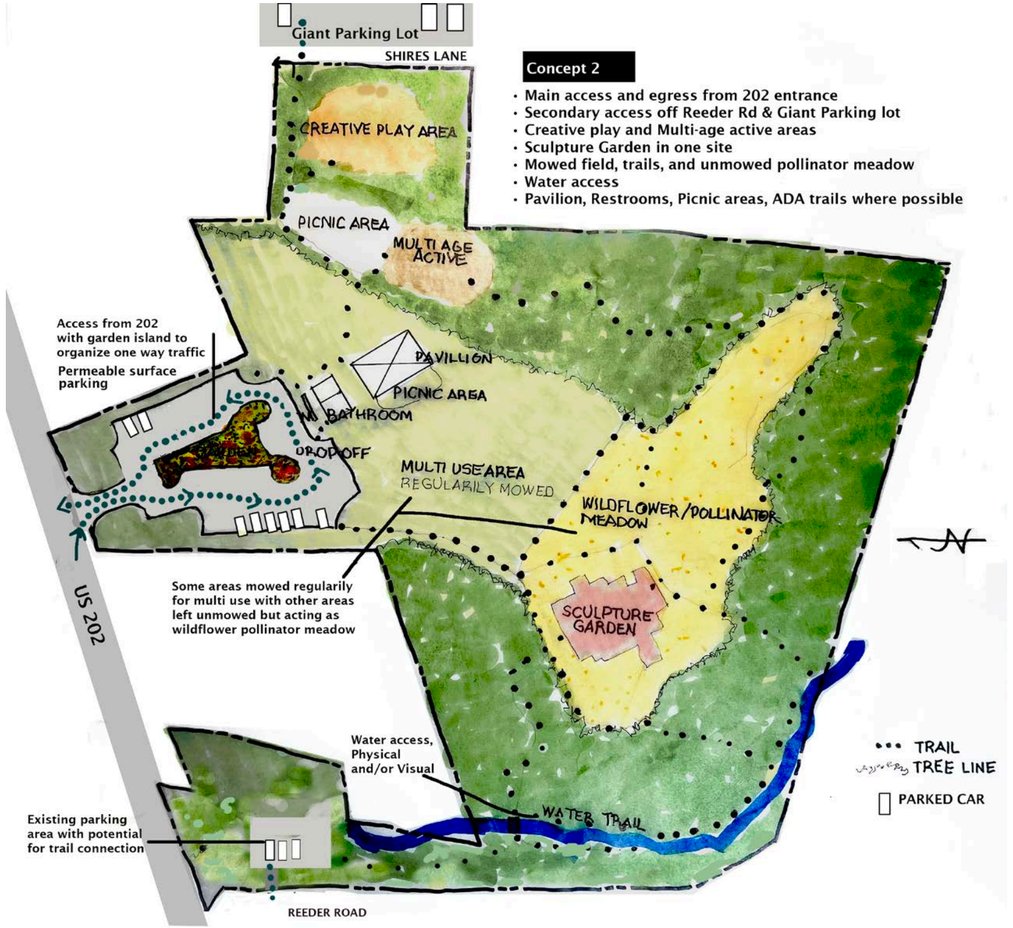
- One concept proposes entering from 202 and traveling in one direction through the park to an exit on Shires Lane and finally out to the traffic light at 202.

- The second utilizes the existing entrance from 202 for access and egress. Secondary entrances and parking should be investigated at both the Giant Parking lot and Reeder Road.



Concept 1

- 1-way vehicular traffic from 202 through to Shires Lane
- Parking tucked-in along the interior road
- Active /teen area near 202 and parking
- Sculptures throughout the site on trails
- Creative play area near Shires Drive with separate parking
- Mowed field, trails, and unmowed pollinator meadow
- Water access
- Gazebo/Pavilion, Restrooms, Picnic areas, ADA trails where possible



Concept 2

- Main access and egress from 202 entrance
- Secondary access off Reeder Rd & Giant Parking lot
- Creative play and Multi-age active areas
- Sculpture Garden in one site
- Mowed field, trails, and unmowed pollinator meadow
- Water access
- Pavilion, Restrooms, Picnic areas, ADA trails where possible

Additional Considerations

1. Environmental Conditions *by Peter Brussock*

The 202 Property has a combination of known and unknown conditions that may influence its future use. A Phase 1 Environmental Assessment was conducted in 2020 for the Township. The report concluded no recognized environmental conditions, no historical recognized environmental conditions, no controlled recognized environmental conditions and three environmental findings in connection with the subject property and/or vicinity.

Upon review of the report, committee member and co-chair Peter Brussock, made additional recommendations for further investigation of the environmental conditions.

A. Soils

A large portion of the upland portion of the property has been filled with materials from unknown sources over an extended period of time. Construction debris (e.g., concrete, pavement) and granular fill materials are evident in the central portion of the property, especially along the east side of the open area of the property. The environmental quality of the fill materials should be evaluated for contaminants and compliance with state soil criteria.

The property was used as a plant nursery for a period consequently, the potential for pesticides contamination in the surface soils needs evaluation.

B. Groundwater

There are two potable wells located on the property and these should be sampled to determine the quality of the groundwater beneath the property in relation to groundwater standards.

An environmental investigation, including groundwater monitoring wells, has been conducted on the automobile sales/reconditioning property on the east side. Obtaining data from the monitoring wells will help determine the potential for contamination from that adjoining property.

The committee recommends that as this project advances these investigations be considered.

2. The Traffic and Parking Problem and Opportunity *by Per von Zelowitz*

There is a national and local parking problem that is the result of misguided policy and zoning requirements over many years. Often new residential and commercial construction requires the creation of a minimum number of new parking spots. Although access to parking is critical, the zoning and policy requirements often led to substantial overbuilding and excess capacity of parking with substantial negative environmental and economic consequences. The United States has approximately two billion parking spots, and in some estimates nearly seven spots for every car. In some cities as much as 14 percent of land area is covered by black asphalt that surrounds malls, apartment buildings and commercial areas.

Recognition of the problem of overbuilding parking is starting to be recognized. For example, legislation has been introduced at the national level, known as the "Yes in My Backyard Act", that would require recipients of certain federal funds to show that they were eliminating or reducing barriers to affordable housing, including reducing off street parking requirements.

This problem is not only national. For example, in Solebury, areas surrounding Logan Square and the New Hope Shopping Center largely consists of black asphalt for parking. While parking is a critical requirement for these areas, it may be that they are overbuilt. The parking lots are never near capacity. This is the same issue in areas with residential developments that maintain substantial on and off-street parking.

We have an opportunity with the 202 Property to address this problem with a solution including leveraging existing Logan Square parking. Providing access to existing parking in Logan Square and access to the 202 Property across Shire Drive provides several benefits.

Environmental – Limit the deployment of more black asphalt in Solebury, reducing water runoff, reducing heat and, increasing green space.

Traffic – Access to parking via the road leading into Logan Square benefits from the existing stop light, and cross walk, improving safety and traffic flow.

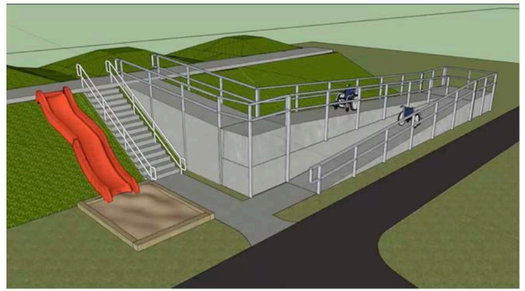
Utility of 202 Property space – Limiting the need for parking on the 202 Property increases the availability of its limited space for more productive recreational use.

Convenience – Improved access to the Logan Square shops and services to 202 Property visitors increases convenience.

Economic – Improving access to Logan Square for 202 Property visitors provides an increased number of potential customers for the shops and services provided by the Logan Square vendors.

One characteristic that needs to be addressed is the steep incline between Logan Square and the 202 Property across Shire Drive. There are several solutions including the example in the image below including stairs, a ramp and a slide for fun that successfully addresses this.

Imagine what's possible



Given the proximity of Logan Square and its already existing parking spaces, the committee strongly recommends exploring the possibility of connecting stairs from the LS lot to the 202 property to encourage access and use of the park. This mutually beneficial relationship would encourage use for both locations.

3. Trail Connections 202 Property and through Solebury *by Robert Chase Palmer*

Connections to Existing Parks
The 202 Property is in close proximity to Aquetong Spring Park, Township-owned open space on Kitchens Lane, and Solebury Park. Connecting these parcels would make sense to increase access to the parks and create a safe connection for the residents in the nearby developments.

On road trails to Route 202
- Parallel trails to Route 202
- Parallel to the New Hope Railroad

Connection to Township-Owned Property on Kitchens Lane
A connection to this property would make use of the HOA Open Space for the North Point Community Association. This association owns one parcel that would connect the Route 202 Property to 104 acres of Open Space on Kitchens Lane. Residents of this development would have easy access to both the park and the open space via a trail connection, and the density of the area would support a large population of people using both spaces.

Connection to Aquetong Springs
A connection to Aquetong Springs could be achieved several different ways. These connections include a Rail with Trail line, as well as running parallel to Route 202 in front of several commercial properties. Connecting both of these properties would increase the land available for residents as open space and parkland, as well as connecting developments to a safe off-road trail system to enjoy.

New Hope Railroad "Rail with Trail"
The New Hope Rail Line is owned by PECO and leased to the railroad. Many people are familiar with the concept of rail-to-trails, which are multi-use trails developed on former railroad corridors. With the increasing popularity of rail-trails across the country, communities are looking for other innovative ways of securing land for safe, popular and effective trail development. An emerging answer is rails-with-trails, which

are trails adjacent to or within an active railroad corridor. The rail-with-trail concept provides even more opportunities for the creation of trail systems that enhance local transportation systems, offering safe and attractive community connections.

Rails-with-trails can also provide a solution for rail companies and local governments concerned about safety risks posed by those who illegally cross rail lines. By providing a safe, attractive alternative for cyclists and pedestrians, often with fencing between the pathway and the railway, rails-with-trails can eliminate the previous incentive to use the tracks as a shortcut.

As of 2021, there are more than 399 rails-with-trails in the United States, with the length located along active railroad corridors totaling more than 1025 miles—and more are being built each year.

4. Naming the Park *by Joanne Reszka*

In recommending potential names and ideas for the 202 property, the committee reflected on the year's discussions of the Vision Statement and the essence of the park. We recommend the following criteria should be considered;

- "Solebury" should be part of the name to reflect the park's connection to the Township community.
- The name should feel welcoming to all Solebury residents; reflect nature and the environment; be interesting, attractive and easy to remember.

Some name recommendations:

Solebury Common or Solebury Commons
Common ground is open to all and are traditionally natural places.

Solebury Central Park
Identifies its location in the community.

Solebury Green
Invokes the idea of a village green; the heart of the community.

We also recommend consideration of the name, **Solebury Park**. While we recognize this park name is already in use, it is simple and attractive and could help "brand" this park as well as "advertise our community" to the continual traffic passing along the busy but anonymous 202 highway corridor. The park on Upper Mountain Road could be renamed; it currently is not well-known to the general community.

This report was approved by vote on December 27, 2023.

Images in this report are for example only and not meant for publication.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Stock-Allen, Chair of the Solebury 202 Property Committee, January 16, 2024.