

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Northampton Township Master Trail and Bicycle Plan (**The Plan**) outlines a vision for improving the quality of life in the Township; providing a wide range of outdoor experiences; and supporting economic development through the development of a comprehensive township-wide trail and bicycle facilities network.

The process of developing this Master Trail and Bicycle Facilities Plan was a multi-step process designed to identify opportunities for providing non-motorized transportation options in all areas of the township. The primary components addressed in individual chapters of the plan are as follows:

1. An introduction outlining the plan vision and goals and objectives
2. Insight into why it is important to plan for trails and bicycle facilities
3. An overview of the planning process used to in the development of this plan
4. A Northampton Township Community Profile designed to help understand opportunities and constraints and identify assets and destination points in the township
5. The Trails and Bicycle Facilities Network
6. An identification of the implementation process and costs guidelines
7. Maintenance and Risk Management
8. Insights on concerns relative to the relationship between trails and bike facilities and crime, property values, and individual property owner liability.



Key concepts and principles of the planning process included:

- The plan should encompass all areas of the township
- The plan should be reflective of the community
- Safety of trail users and bicyclists of varying skill sets and experience levels was paramount
- Plan recommendations should be consistent with previously conducted planning studies
- The plan should address concerns and provide factual responses relative to the relationship between trails and crime, property values, and individual property owner liability.



The Plan begins with an overview of the benefits of trails, the demand for trails and bike facilities, and information on who uses trails.

Key takeaways:

- Trails and bicycle facilities provide a myriad of benefits including improvements in health, quality of life, while also providing a non-motorized transportation alternative benefiting everyone in the community;
- Demand for trails and bicycle facilities is widespread, growing and is often a key consideration in where people want to reside; and
- Trail users span all age groups. However, consistently fifty to fifty five percent of trails users are in the 46 - 65 age groups. Similarly, although trails are used for a variety of purposes, the primary usage is for walking and bicycling.



The Plan provides an overview of the steps involved in the planning process including:

- Formation of a steering committee to oversee the development of the plan;
- Development of the goals for the planning study;

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- Review of previous planning efforts and studies;
- Creation of a community profile;
- Identification of proposed trail and bicycle facilities;
- A prioritization of the proposed trails and bicycle facilities;
- Development and review of the draft plan by the steering committee; and
- Public presentation of the plan.

The Plan describes the process used to identify the various types of segments to be proposed as part of the network including:

- Dividing the township into 5 planning areas;
- Describing the various types of trails and bicycle facilities discussed in the plan;
- Development of a set of trail standards; and
- Identifying the proposed trails and bicycle facilities.

The Plan includes a profile of Northampton Township in several areas including land use, demographics, natural features, man-made features such as existing trails, parks, schools and commercial areas, and historic resources.

Key takeaways:

- Northampton Township is one of the largest municipalities, both in terms of acreage and population, in the Central Bucks area and connects to nine surrounding municipalities with the predominant land uses being residential, parks and open space, and agriculture.
- Although one of the largest municipalities, the population is declining driven by a large decrease in those under 19. This has been offset by sizable increases in those 55 and older.
- Despite being almost fully built-out, the township possess a great deal of natural resources including the Churchville Reservoir, the Neshaminy Creek, Pine Run, Mill Creek and Ironworks Creeks stream corridors, and a sizable amount of agricultural land.
- Similarly, the township benefits from a well-developed and connected road network, as well as 32 miles of existing trails, and over 1,300 acres of parkland.

The Plan identifies:

- 5 different types of trails and bicycle facilities including Shared Use Trails, Rail Trails, Bike Lanes, Bike Sharrows, and Sidewalks
- 124 individual trail and bike facility segments, totaling 57.1 miles
- 53 Neighborhood Bike Routes totaling 45.36 miles

Area	Shared Use					Total		Neighborhood Bike Routes	Total
	Trails / Boardwalk	Newtown Rail Trail	Bike Lanes	Bike Sharrows	Sidewalks	Trails & Bike Facilities			
1	2.67	-	1.27	11.04	-	14.98	3.36	18.34	
2	1.30	-	0.92	3.26	1.05	6.53	12.14	18.53	
3	5.11	2.35*	1.84	4.01	0.64	13.95*	6.32	19.63	
4	4.44	0.22	0.66	4.02	0.48	9.81	9.03	18.63	
5	5.02	1.91	0.30	4.29	0.31	11.83	14.51	26.34	
Total	18.54	4.48*	4.99	26.62	2.48	57.11*	45.36	101.48	

* Segment 48 and 48A are counted once as they represent different alignments of the same length for the same trail segment.



The Plan includes the identification of a priority set of trails and bicycle facilities which consolidated the 124 individual segments into 53 facilities, including a description of the evaluation and scoring process used to objectively evaluate the various facilities. This process assigned a score to each facility for 9 different criteria in three categories:

- **Trail User Safety:** (1) How safe is the trail for a variety of users based on separation from vehicular traffic
- **Feasibility:** (2) Cost to the township, (3) Ownership of right-of-way, (4) Extent of constraints and engineering
- **Connectivity to:** (5) Commercial areas, (6) Parks & Recreation, (7) Housing, (8) Schools, (9) Overall Trail Network

The following trails and bicycle facilities achieved the highest scores across the nine criteria. These 11* trails and bicycle facilities should be given highest priority by the township as it implements the recommendations contained in this plan. The name of each trail, including its final score, and a description is provided below.

- 1 **Newtown Rail Trail** (20.50) - Continuous shared use trail contained fully within the SEPTA right-of-way of the former Fox Chase-Newtown train line from Bristol Road to the Neshaminy Creek
- 2 **New Road** (18.61) - Spans the length of New Road from Hatboro Road to Bustleton Pike
- 3 **Old Jordan Road** (17.75) - Will join East and Middle Holland roads to connect to the Newtown Rail Trail
- 4 **Neshaminy Greenway Trail** (17.46) - Links the center of Village Shires to the County’s proposed Neshaminy Greenway trail which would extends along the Neshaminy Creek from Chalfont to the Delaware River.
- 5 **Upper Holland Road** (16.50) - Bike facilities would cover the length of Upper Holland Road from Second Street Pike to Holland Road
- 6 **Middle Holland Road** (15.00) - Dedicated bike lanes would link Council Rock South to Old Jordan Road and the Newtown Rail Trail
- 7 **Newtown Richboro Road** (14.81) - Extends from the commercial center of Richboro to the intersection of St. Leonards Road and Newtown Richboro Road. Would connect to the Northampton Township Recreation Complex and, via the proposed Neshaminy Greenway Trail, connectivity to Tyler State Park
- 8 **Temperance Lane** (14.50) - Connects the northwestern portion of the township to the commercial center of Richboro
- 9A **Buck Road** (14.00) - Links the Village of Holland to Holland Middle School, spanning Buck Road from the intersection of Holland and Buck roads, and East Holland Road, via the existing pathway on the Hillcrest Elementary and Holland Middle School property
- 9B **Stoneyford Road** (14.00) - Links the neighborhoods along Stoneyford Road, and those near the intersection of Stoneyford Road and East Holland Road, to Big Meadow Park and the Neshaminy Greenway Trail at Big Meadow Park
- 9C **Tanyard Road** (14.00) - Running from Jacksonville Road to Bustleton Pike this segment would provide easy access to Richboro

* The last three segments all scored and ranked equally resulting in a total of 11 high-ranking trails

It should be noted that these priority trails encompass the entire township meaning that each area of the township is represented.



The Plan outlines an implementation process and provides an overview of the many tools available and steps involved in the trail development process including:

- Requiring trails as part of the development process
- Acquisition of right-of-way
- Securing funding
- Design and Engineering, Permitting and Construction



The Plan provides a summary of general cost guidelines for the development of different types of trails. No detailed cost estimate for the complete development of the proposed trails and bicycle facilities network has been provided as many variables impact the cost of trail development It is envisioned that many of the trails will be paid for by developers as part of the land development process and that any additional funding required will be obtained through federal and state grant programs.



The Plan provides information on trail maintenance and risk management including:

- Trail maintenance including the need to develop a trail maintenance program and schedule;
- Recommendation for ensuring safety and security on the trails; and
- Risk management techniques the township can use to limit their liability exposure.



The Plan addresses frequently heard concerns about trails as related to Crime, Liability, and Property Values.

Key takeaways for each of these topics are identified below:

Crime

- The extent of crime is not significantly different for areas adjacent to trails as compared to areas farther away from the trail.
- Prior planning studies from across the country also indicate that crime is no greater on, and/or adjacent to trails, as compared to the surrounding community.

Liability

- Property owners adjacent to the trail are afforded various legal protections that limit their exposure, similar to the same protections afforded to property owners with sidewalks.
- Insurance industry experts affirm that proximity to a public recreational facility, such as a trail, park or recreation field is not a factor in the pricing of an individual homeowner’s policy.

Property Values

- Property values, based on an Average Sales Price per Square Foot analysis, are typically the same for properties adjacent to the trail as those in the surrounding community.
- Rates of real estate appreciation for homes following the opening of the trail are typically in-line with those of the greater community.
- There is no evidence to suggest that real estate turnover in the year following the introduction of the trail is higher in areas adjacent to trails as compared to the greater community.



The Plan concludes with a set of specific recommendations for ensuring successful implementation of this plan including:

- Official adoption of the plan by elected officials
- Review of the priority trail rankings in this plan to determine if there are any upcoming land development projects where the township might be able to get the developer to fund construction of a key trail segment as part of the development process.
- Review both the township and PennDOT road repaving schedules to identify opportunities for incorporating proposed bike sharrows and bike lanes as part of the resurfacing project.
- Support the County-funded design and construction of the Newtown Rail Trail as a major spine for the overall Northampton Township Trails and Bicycle Facilities Network with low cost and high return for the township.
- Where possible, consider widening the cartway width as part of future resurfacing projects on township roads to be able to accommodate dedicated bike lanes, particularly on those proposed for bicycle sharrows.
- Review the priority trail rankings to identify specific easements required for future development of trails and begin the process of acquiring the right-of-way needed.
- Continue to partner with other municipalities and the County to take advantage of opportunities to extend the Northampton Township Trails and Bicycle Facilities Network beyond the municipal borders.
- Review and understand the various grant funding sources available in terms of grant requirements, project eligibility, and deadlines to ensure that the township maximizes its potential for securing grant funding for implementation of this plan and recommended segments.