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Recreation, Park & Open Space Plan

Recreation Commission
515 Burlington Avenue
Delanco, NJ 08075-4498

Township of Delanco

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I. INTRODUCTION

GENERAL

Delanco is a suburban community measuring approximately 2.5 square miles. The Township is bordered by the Delaware River to the North, the Rancocas Creek to the Southwest, and Route 130 to the Southeast, all of which provide the Delanco Park System with a rare asset that must be used to its advantage in order to realize the areas full potential. This plan intends to incorporate these resources while assessing the Townships potential of developing an accommodating park system for the community.

The initial steps of the planning process delineate major points of destination and possible linkages between elements within the Township, as well as various methods of providing circulation for this region of the County. In a collaborative effort with Delanco Recreation Commission, it is intended that the park system within Delanco Township work with the county park system, with a complete array of amenities for the local Delanco residents to take advantage.

ASSESSMENT

Opportunities to creatively integrate each Township park into a comprehensive park system and to utilize the water features and scenic views as an integral feature in the design of the community parks and recreation system abound. There are many possibilities to arranging the elements in such a way that the best of the natural features are preserved, if not enhanced.

The assessment of existing parks and their proper identification is a crucial phase in determining the park needs of the community. A detailed list was comprised by the Recreation Commission that includes the specific types of parks and their amenities. They include:

1. A Multipurpose Community Park – approx. 15-20 acres with amenities including:
   - Community center (with outdoor use area and restrooms)
   - Open play area
   - Picnic area
   - Natural scenic area
   - Active structured play areas (courts, fields, etc.)
   - Walking trails
   - Maintenance/storage/parking/landscape buffer areas

2. An Intensive Athletic Park – approx. 30-40 acres, with amenities including:
   - Multipurpose Community Center building
   - Outdoor restrooms
   - 6 lighted basketball courts
   - 4 lighted tennis courts,
   - 1 lighted street hockey rink
   - Play area
   - Group picnic area
   - Maintenance/storage/parking/landscape buffer areas

3. Natural Area Parks – two or more sites acreage varies with acquisition of available lands and water areas amenities including:
   - Walking/hiking/nature trails
   - Bike paths
   - Interpretive sites
   - Picnic areas
   - Open play areas
   - Water site/access areas
   - Camping area

Maintenance/storage/parking/landscape buffer areas

4. Community Parks/ Neighborhood Parks – three neighborhood parks of at least 1 acre each and specialized facilities at community parks of at least 2 acres each. The primary facility selections for the neighborhood parks are the development of children's play areas. The facility selections for the community parks could include specialized items such as a skateboard park, amphitheater, youth services center, senior center or other specialized facility that is deemed appropriate for the community and the demand for services required by the interest or demographic served.

Also according to the study, there are currently five types of park facilities provided in Delanco. They include regional open space, regional parks, community parks, public neighborhood parks, and private neighborhood parks. The following definition is provided for each facility:

Regional Open Space

Lands primarily acquired through dedications or purchase. Once dedicated to the township the land becomes permanent public open space area. These areas vary in size and location throughout the township and may have full or limited public access depending on environmental sensitivity.

Regional Parks

Lands owned by Burlington County and are managed by the County Parks Department. There is no mandated dedication standard or park size required. Regional parks can be active or passive parks.

Community Parks

These parks are generally a minimum of 20 acres in size (excluding greenbelts, trails, and public facility/school grounds) and able to serve a population of up to 10,000 persons. Community parks are owned and maintained by the Township. Community parks are designed with facilities that are Townwide in scope and are intended to serve the entire Township.

Public Neighborhood Parks

These parks are generally a minimum or one acre in size and able to serve a minimum population of 1,000 persons. Public parks are owned and maintained by the Township.

Private Neighborhood Parks

These parks are generally a minimum of ½ acre in size and able to serve the immediate development or specific planned community in which they are located. Private parks are owned and maintained by homeowner associations or maintenance district.

In order to plan for future use of the parks within Delanco, 'modifications are necessary to improve existing service delivery, appeal and use of facilities, or free up public lands for redeveloped recreation/public facility or open space uses'. It would seem that a number of interests could conceivably be served by properly organizing the Delanco Park System to accommodate the areas active and passive recreational needs. From one standpoint, the creation of facilities would provide a safe system to serve the needs of the Township and County residents of all ages.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of developing a Master Plan for the Delanco Township Park System is intended to look at the potential of developing proposed parks, redeveloping existing parks, and creating links through a trail system in order to connect the passive and active recreational facilities for use by the residents of this part of the county and possibly to serve a larger regional base. The Master Plan for the Township involves looking at a number of variables, which will have an effect on the recommendations made regarding the future development of the Park System. In creating a master plan for Delanco, the existing parks were evaluated so that specific needs could be determined in order to present the best possible park system for the Township.

The plan will help to establish goals and objectives, while creating a program, which can meet the needs of the Township. In the comprehensive planning process these goals and objectives provide a framework and guidance for the decision making process which will follow. The Recreation Commission of Delanco Township comprised an outline of goals and objectives in the 'Master Plan Element Revisions – Parks, Recreation & Open Space'. Their goals and objectives were incorporated as a basis for the goals and objectives that were developed for this master plan report.

Many of the goals are purposely broad and will take time to achieve, although some of the objectives may be capable of being implemented within a shorter period. The following goals are followed by a set of objectives that will provide the direction needed to reach each specific goal.

GOAL

Determine the quality and flexibility of the existing facilities.

OBJECTIVES

- Assess the existing facilities of each park within the Township and evaluate which of the parks will need to be redeveloped, rehabilitated and/or altered in order to improve utilization.

GOAL

Analyze the park system in order to be responsive to feasibility, timing and capability of future development.

OBJECTIVES

- Assess the capability of the proposed park system to adequately accommodate the size and needs of the population, as well as the ability to adapt to the changing demographics and recreation preferences.

- Provide an overall assessment of the park system and discuss the opportunity for additional lands to be acquired and possibly developed, passive or actively.

GOAL

Determine the existing park layout throughout the Township so that each is easily accessible.

OBJECTIVES

- Create trail connections to establish easy accessibility for the residents to each of the parks within the Township park system.

- Establish park visibility by the incorporation of signage from existing major arterials.

- Discuss the incorporation of consistent identification signage at each park within the park system.

GOAL

Assess ways that each park can incorporate facilities in order to respond to the needs of the community in a flexible manner.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide accessible facilities to those individuals with physical disabilities.

- Review the development possibility of educational opportunities within the park.

- Assess the potential of providing specially designated facilities which will be oriented to the entire community, such as natural areas, fine arts, intensive athletics, etc.

GOAL

Determine what characteristics of the site provide for a unique opportunity from both a potential use and/or an educational aspect.

OBJECTIVES

- Assess the characteristics of the open space and the potential of their development into passive recreational open space facilities.

- Assess how the elements of water and plants can be integrated into aspects of the open space. Develop and implement a plan that can utilize the unique characteristics of this site.

- Identify potentially sensitive areas including wetlands, steep slopes and rare habitats and evaluate what uses may be overlapped or integrated to provide for the initial goals without causing excessive detrimental effects.

II. SITE INVENTORY

SITE ANALYSIS

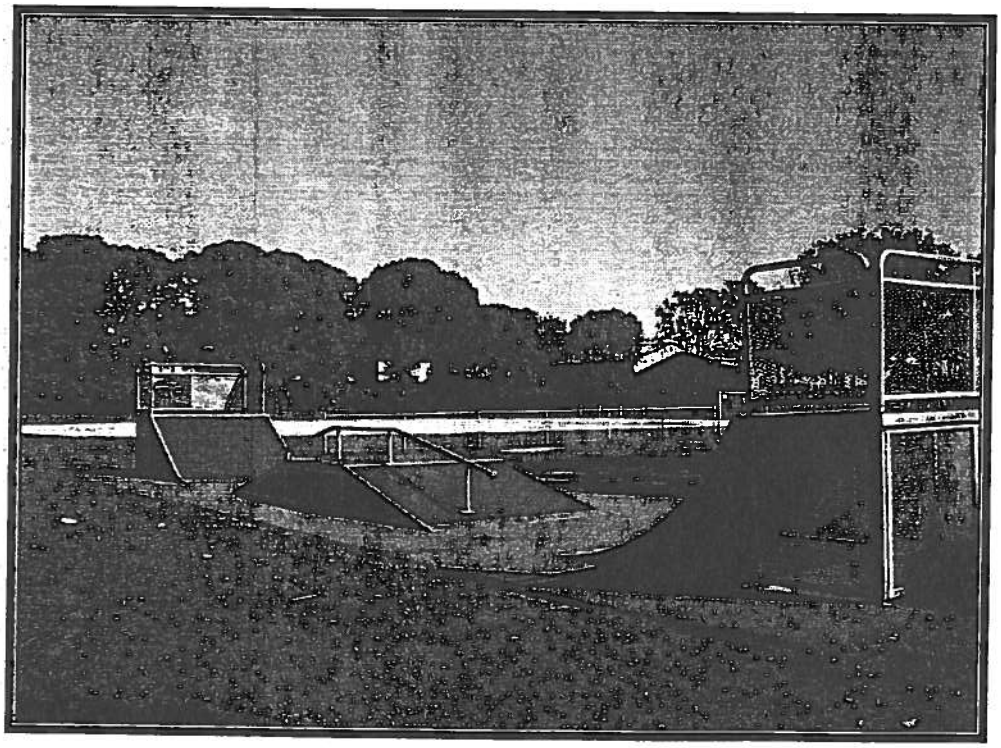
Existing facilities located within Delanco Township include four existing parks, one proposed park, and 2 open space parcels. The four existing parks include Cooper Avenue Park, Pearson School, Walnut School, and West Avenue Park. The proposed park is currently known as the Pennington Farm site. This site also includes one open space parcel, adjacent to the proposed county park facility. The second open space parcel is known as Hawk Island, and presently is administered by the Army Corp of Engineers.

In order to understand each park individually, the following pages provide explanations of the existing facilities located within each of the sites, as well as specific issues of concern that should be resolved in order to use each park to its full potential.

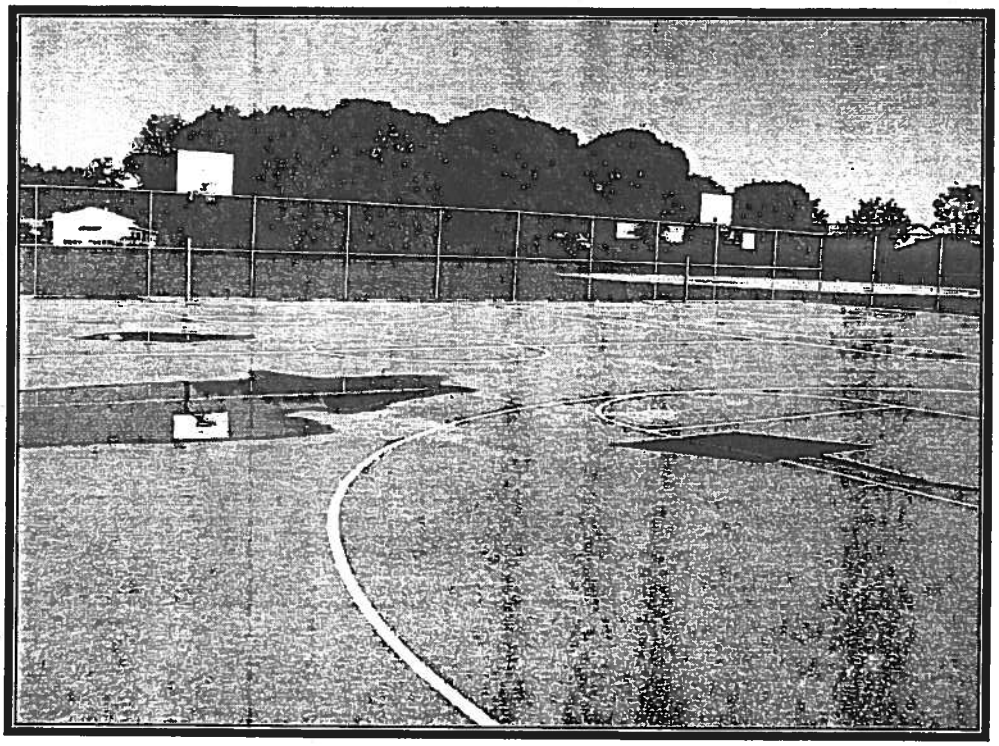
Cooper Avenue Park

The Cooper Avenue Park site measures approximately 2.3 acres and is located along a major arterial in Delanco known as Cooper Avenue, which links the Township road network to Route 130. Facilities within the park include (1) Babe Ruth Diamond, (2) Basketball Courts, and (1) Skatepark.

The Skatepark and both of the basketball courts have recently been resurfaced. New fencing and benches have also been provided for the Babe Ruth diamond. Factors such as these indicate the active use of this particular park. However, problems including drainage, re-grading and handicap accessibility are few that should be remedied in order to optimize the use of this park.



Also noted was the lack of handicap accessibility to any of the facilities within the park. In order to provide accessibility, an asphalt pathway may begin at the parking area, run along the edges of the basketball court and the skate park, and extend to the baseball field.



Site analysis of Cooper Avenue Park showed the outfield of the Babe Ruth diamond to be uneven and in need of re-grading. As well as being a safety provision, a graded outfield would increase the parks ability to be used for other activities, for example the outfield may be used as a practice soccer field.

The fencing of the outfield was seen as being at a haphazard angle. Modification of the existing fencing so that it runs straight from the basketball courts to the far end of the park, running parallel to the road, would resolve the unnecessary waste of park space. This minor alteration would increase the existing parking area and would provide more usable park space so that a path may be located along the road.

Pearson School Park

The Pearson School is an elementary school for ages K – 5. The site measures approximately 6.4 acres, which includes the existing parking lot, school building (34,000 sq. ft.), and recreational facilities. Existing fields include (1) softball field, (1) soccer field, and (1) field hockey field. Future renovations to the school will add a 24,000 sq. ft. building addition, additional parking lot, and proposed basketball court.

Pearson School is situated along the primary roadway that runs through Delanco known as Burlington Road.

No specific revisions of this park are deemed necessary.

Block, Lot

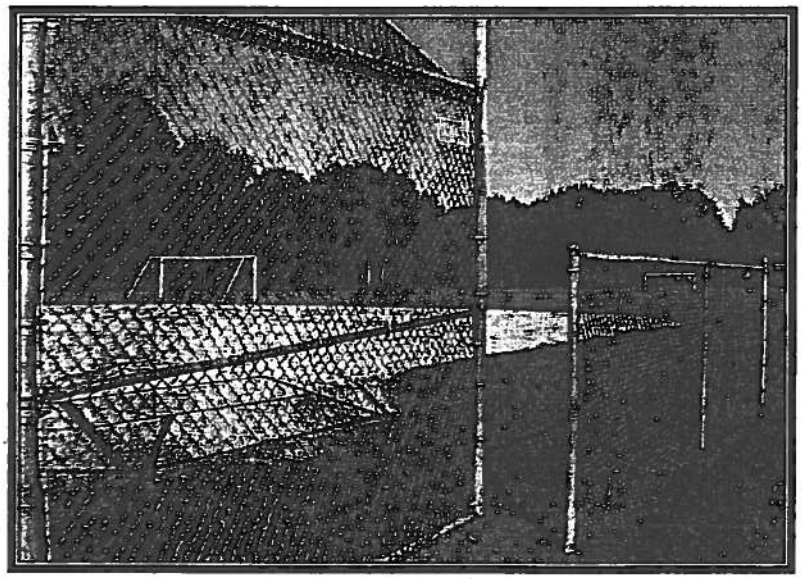
West Avenue Park

The West Avenue Park site is located along the Delaware River and measures approximately 12.9 total acres. The Township owned site is comprised of both athletic and open space.

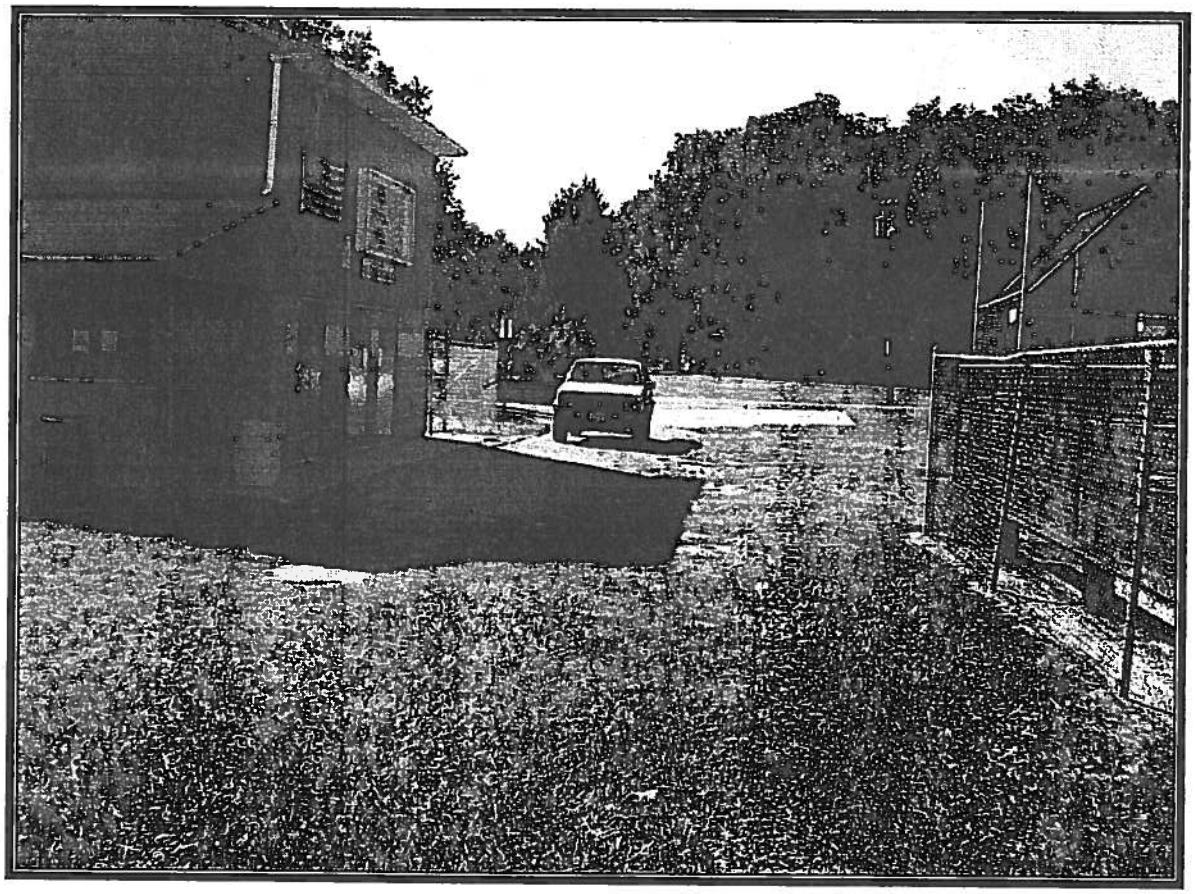


West Ave Park Recreation

The recreational facility on the site is located off of West Avenue. The space is approximately 2.1 acres and includes (1) little league field, (1) softball field, (1) tee ball field, and (1) overlay soccer field.



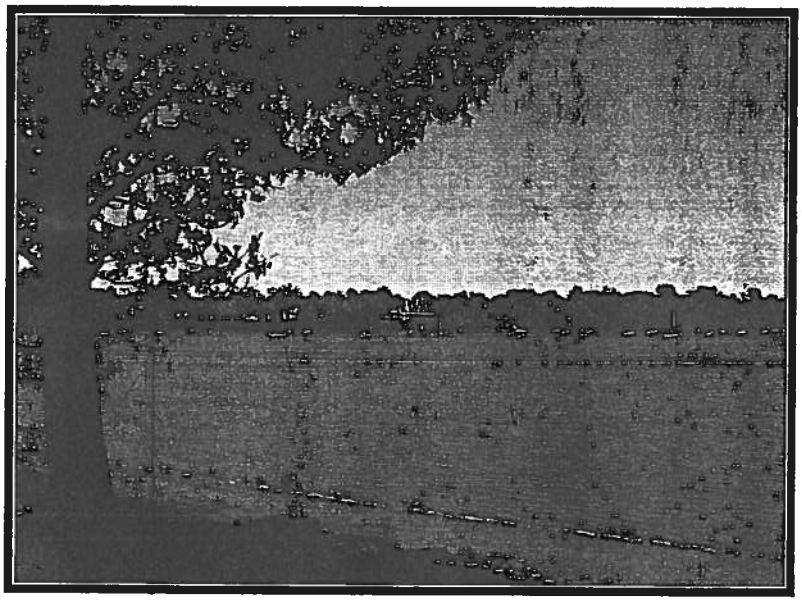
The facilities at this site prove to be adequate and any revisions are minor and may easily be resolved. The existing site provides a maintenance gravel drive through an entrance adjacent to the concession building. In the past, this area has proven to be hazardous, resulting in multiple injuries from a conflict of use by both pedestrians and bicyclists.



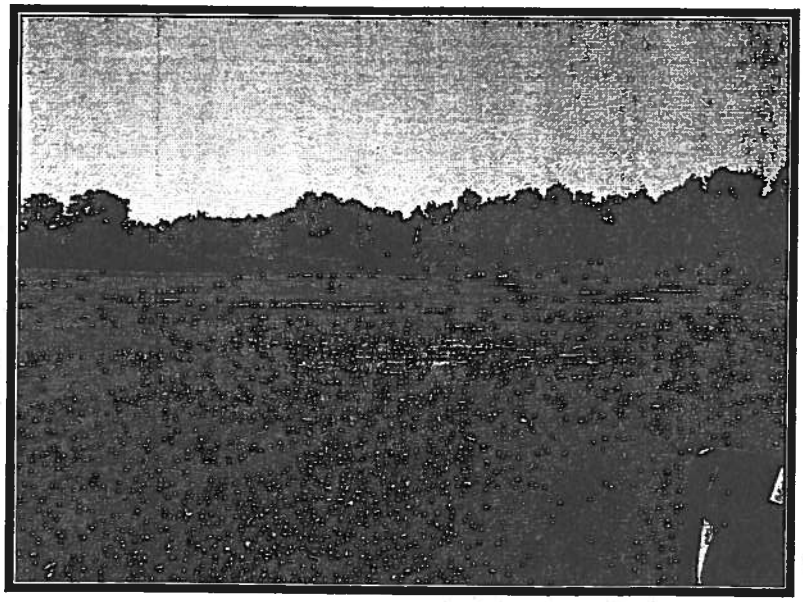
In order to resolve this particular problem, the entrance may be closed off or gated so that bikes may not easily enter or exit. As an alternative, a paved asphalt path may be provided along the perimeter of the park. This addition would provide park circulation and discourage bicyclists to travel through the major areas of activity within the park.

West Ave Park Open Space

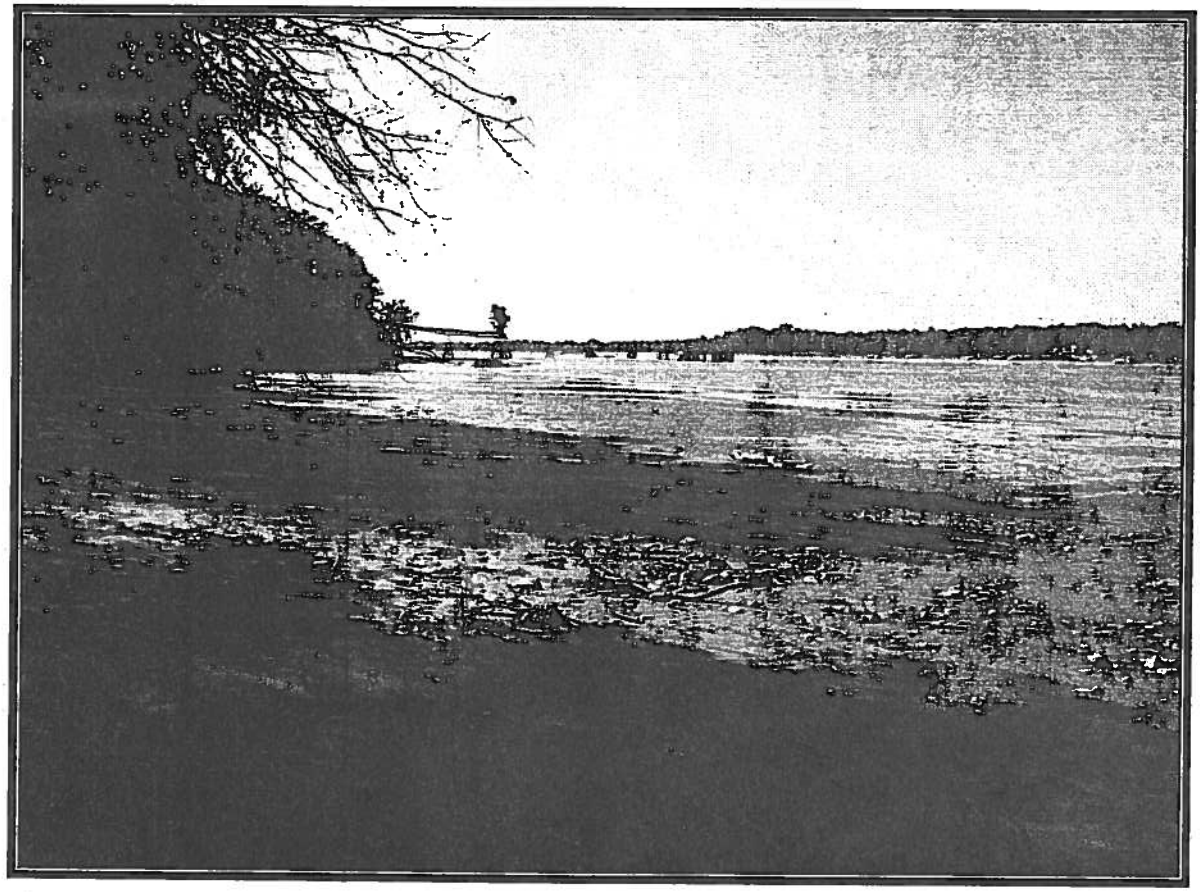
The open space of the West Avenue Park measures approximately 10.8 acres. This area provides frontage along the Delaware River. Presently, there is no programmed passive or active recreational use for this parcel of open space.



Past/Present uses have included a leaf compost site for the Township and an organized haunted Halloween walk. The site is not gated and is often used by local residents and children for activities such as walking and biking.



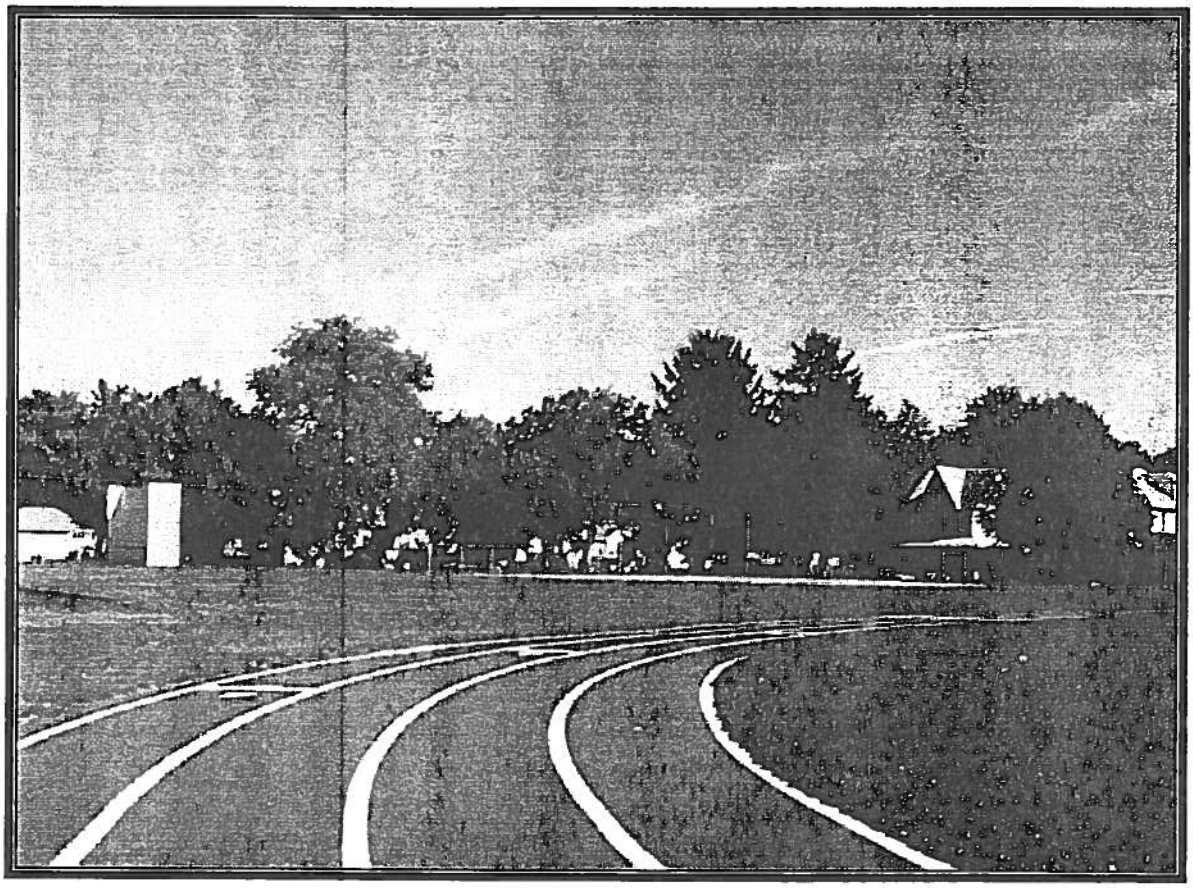
A major consideration in the evaluation of potential park space must be given to the West Avenue open space area. This particular piece of land has the promise of being a successful park, whether strictly passive or active, or a combination of both. The open land located within the parcel may be ideal for an athletic facility and would create a logical connection to the existing facilities off of West Avenue.

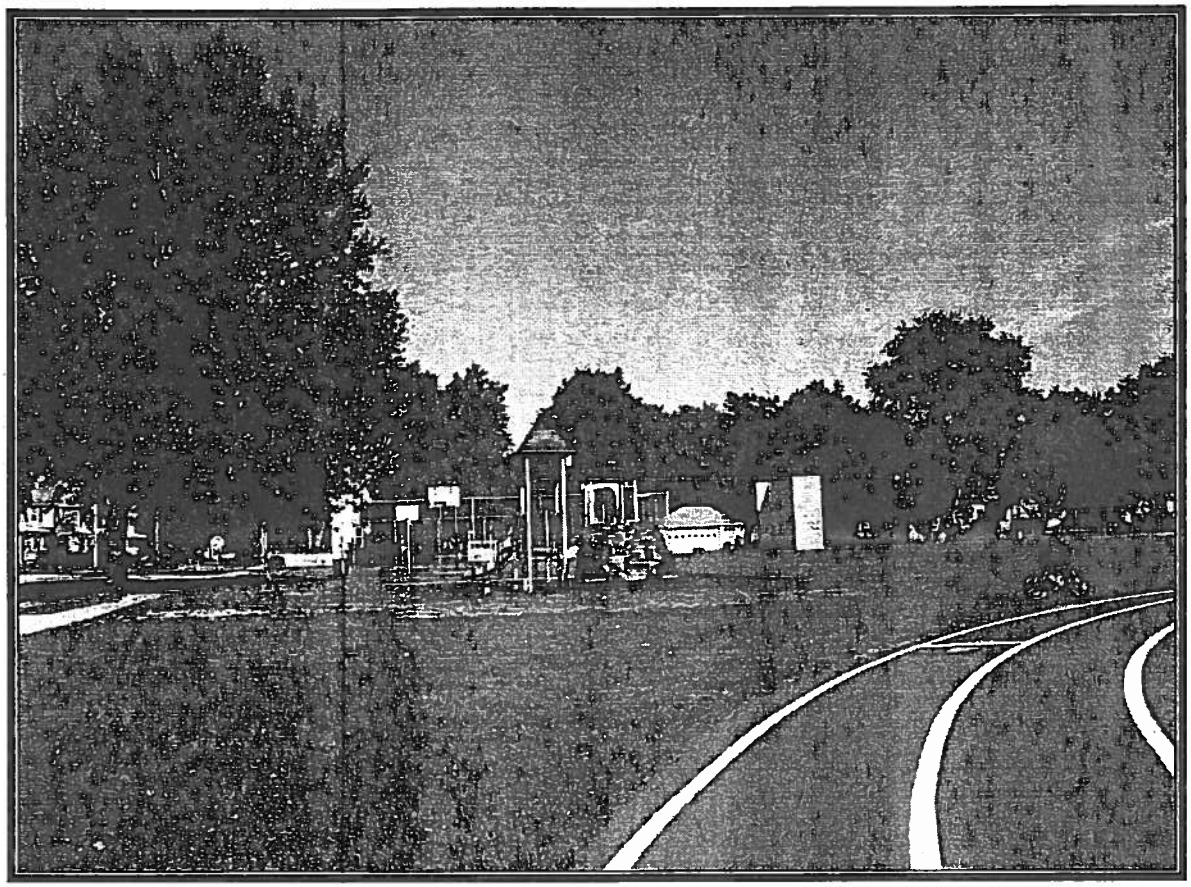


Winding trails located throughout the woodland and scenic views of the Delaware Riverfront would provide enticing passive recreation within this park space.

Walnut School

The Walnut School park site comprises one entire block and measures approximately 1.5 acres. It is located across the road from Walnut Elementary School, which serves children grades 5 through 8. Facilities on the park site include (1) softball field and the recent installation of (1) 1/8 mile track and (1) playground.





Minor revisions to this site include handicap accessibility to the playground. The addition of an asphalt path from the adjacent sidewalk to the play area would be sufficient in resolving this particular problem.

The Walnut School Park proves to be ideally located, in a centralized location for all residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Pennington Park

The proposed Pennington Park is meant to be an intensive athletic facility for Delanco Township. It has been designed to include (2) Tee Ball fields, (2) Softball Fields (60'), (2) Little League Fields (60'), (4) Overlay Soccer Fields, (2) Basketball Courts, (1) Skatepark, (2) Tot Lots, and (1) Playground, ages 5-12.

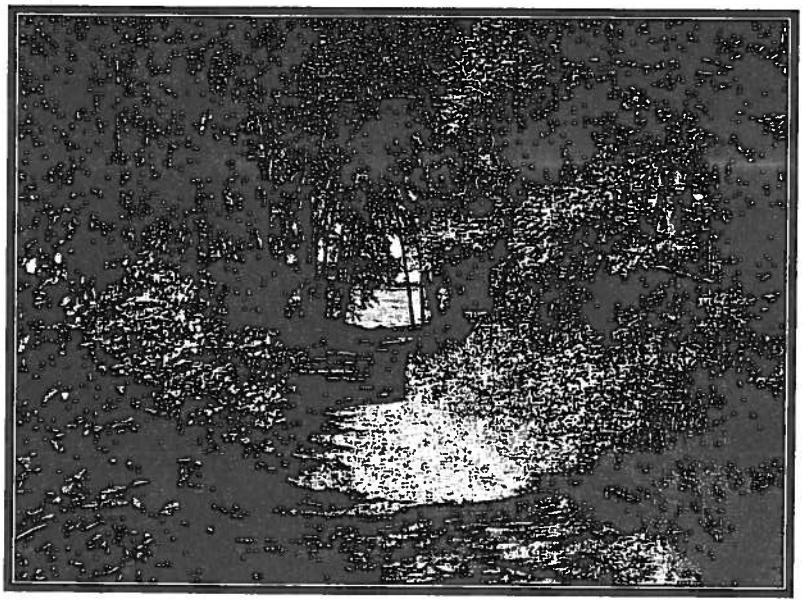
Pennington Park will fulfill the need for an intensive athletic facility within Delanco Township.

Hawk Island Open Space

Hawk Island is a peninsula located along the coast of Delanco where the Delaware River and the Rancocas Creek converge. The open space parcel is federally administered, and measures approximately 85 acres. This parcel of open space is not currently programmed for any recreational activities.



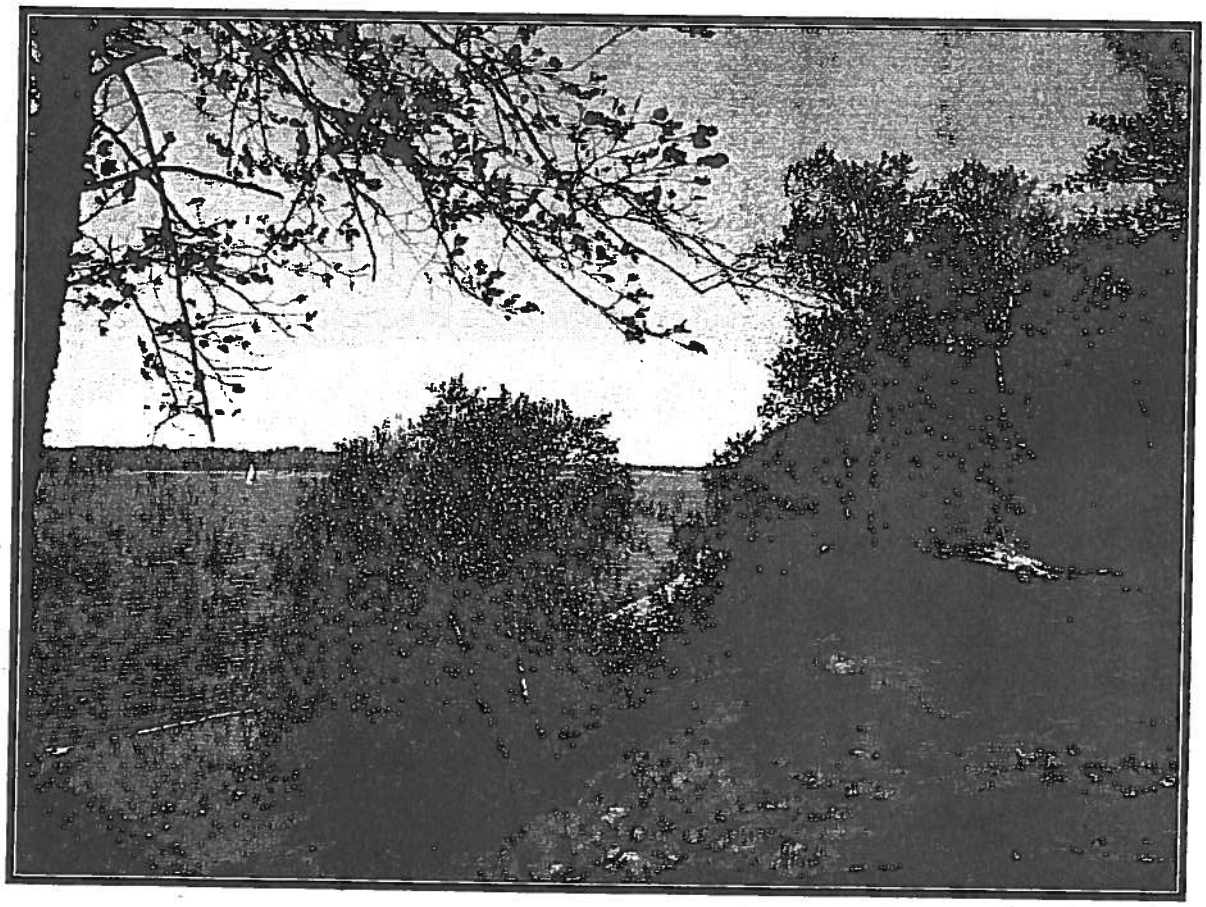
The island is presently gated so that vehicular access is not feasible, although pedestrian access is possible. Residents often take advantage of the open space for passive recreation. Trails are located throughout the woodland, with two routes of compacted earth running along either end of the island, indicating heavily trafficked pathways.



There is a quarry located within the open space situated the Delaware side of the island.



Hawk Island is situated at the most ideal location for the creation of a successful County Park. The island is already heavily used, and with the incorporation of a trail system throughout Delanco Township, Hawk Island can be used as a main focal point in order to link the entire Township park system. The Waterfront location of Hawk Island provides one of the most beautiful scenic opportunities along the Delaware River that must be used to its full advantage. With the integration of programmed passive recreation, the incorporation of Hawk Island into the Township-wide, as well as countywide, park system would prove to be a successful endeavor.



The Inventory and Analysis of the Master Plan Revisions, October 1999, provides a basis for which to examine the Delanco Park System. Of the previously mentioned existing park facilities located within Delanco, each may be identified as either a community park or a neighborhood park. Neighborhood parks may be further classified as a public or private park.

The following table details the number of athletic facilities that presently exist in Delanco as compared to the total number of facilities that will result after the construction of the Pennington Farm Intensive Athletic Park and the Pearson School addition.

ATHLETIC FACILITY	TOTAL NUMBER EXISTING	TOTAL NUMBER WITH PROPOSED ADDITIONS
Baseball	0	2
Softball	3	5
Babe Ruth	1	1
Little League	1	3
Tee Ball	1	3
Basketball	3	4
Field Hockey	1	1
Skate Park	1	2
Soccer	1	1
Overlay Soccer	1	3
Tot Lot	1	3
Playground, Ages 5 – 12	0	1
Tennis	0	2
Track - 1/8 Mile	1	1

The following table details the number of existing facilities (after the addition of proposed parks) as compared to the total minimum number of athletic facilities for community and/or neighborhood parks in order to meet the community's basic recreational needs. The minimum number is based on the Recreation Committee Master Plan Element Revisions.

ATHLETIC FACILITY	MINIMUM NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER WITH PROPOSED ADDITIONS
Multi-purpose Community Center	1	0
Play Area	1	4
Basketball Court	2	4
Football/Soccer Fields	1	4
Multipurpose courts	2	
Softball/Baseball Fields	2	14
Lighted Tennis Courts	2	2
Volleyball Courts	2	0
Open Play area	1	0
Amphitheater	1	0
Trail (1/2-2 miles)	1	0
Group Picnic Area	1	0
Fine Arts Center	1	0
Roller Hockey Rink	1	0
Skate Park	1	2
Youth services center	1	0
Senior Center	1	0
Golf/driving range	1	0
Gymnasium	1	0
Performing arts	1	0
Competitive pool complex	1	0

According to the Master Plan Revisions, the trends in development are the main concern for the Township of Delanco.

> There have been no past dedication requirements for land of fees by developers, excepting those enforced in court judgements or legal settlements. The Township may not have other large tracts of land available for residential development as the current master plan reflects, however, the implementation of a subdivision ordinance would establish the necessary requirements for possible future changes to the master plan or Township boundaries. The Township will have to place a strong emphasis on grants, gifts/bequests or purchase of lands necessary for the development of the Delanco park system.
>
> The Township may also need to consider the inclusion of other types of development (other than solely residential) in the subdivision ordinance. One consideration for this concept is that nonresidential development may continue to generate additional demands on the Public Park and recreation system, for example, through employee participation in adult athletics, special events and use of passive recreation areas. The development and or improvement of a park system might also be viewed as a benefit to those considering business relocation to Delanco.
>
> The community continues to share a concern for the improvement and use of recreation and park facilities. The population has remained relatively stable over the past decade and has seen moderate shifts in age group demographics. The inclusion of populations from two proposed residential developments should prove to be the only major increases the next decade. In terms of social trends, the Township can expect to see a continuation of certain tendencies: adults and children have a shared interest in competitive athletics; additional citizen interest will remain strong in areas of access to open space, river and creek areas; families will continue to express a desire for local play area; community meeting and program facilities will continue to be in demand.

TRAIL SYSTEM ANALYSIS

Trail systems throughout the country are increasingly becoming a common way to not only provide areas of active recreation, but are a means to encourage the surrounding residents to opt for modes of transportation other than automobiles, such as walking and biking. The scenic natural setting of much of Delanco, such as the Delaware River, Rancocas Creek, and various park and open spaces, provide a basis in order to create a pleasant background for passive recreation, such as walking and biking.

A proposed trail system would provide Delanco Township with the opportunity to create linkages between its neighborhoods and common destination points within the Township. Local schools, existing and proposed active and passive recreational facilities, developed areas, and open space creates a basis of destination points with which to design the system. These destination points have been identified, detailing the feasibility for the creation of the trail system. These resources suggest the relationships between various portions of the Township and possible connections. A visual survey of the Township and discussion with those familiar with the Township provide a level of insight into the potential of creating linkages.

The planned path primarily travels along the Rancocas Creek and the Delaware River. Private residential lots located along a majority of both of the waterfronts presented difficulties in designing the path of the trail. Therefore, in these instances existing sidewalks or road painting would provide the trail along existing roadways. Many of the neighborhood streets travel parallel to the water, such as Rancocas Avenue, which travels along the Rancocas Creek to Hawk Island, and Delaware Avenue, which travels along the Delaware River from Hawk Island to its termination at Lilac Lane. For the most part, these particular streets provide the neighborhood portions of the trail.

The existing street network throughout Delanco provides sidewalks to accommodate pedestrian activity, but with the incorporation of a designated trail network that link areas of interest within Delanco, the use of community park and open space would be promoted so that these various parts of the Township could be linked and looped to eventually create a cohesive whole.

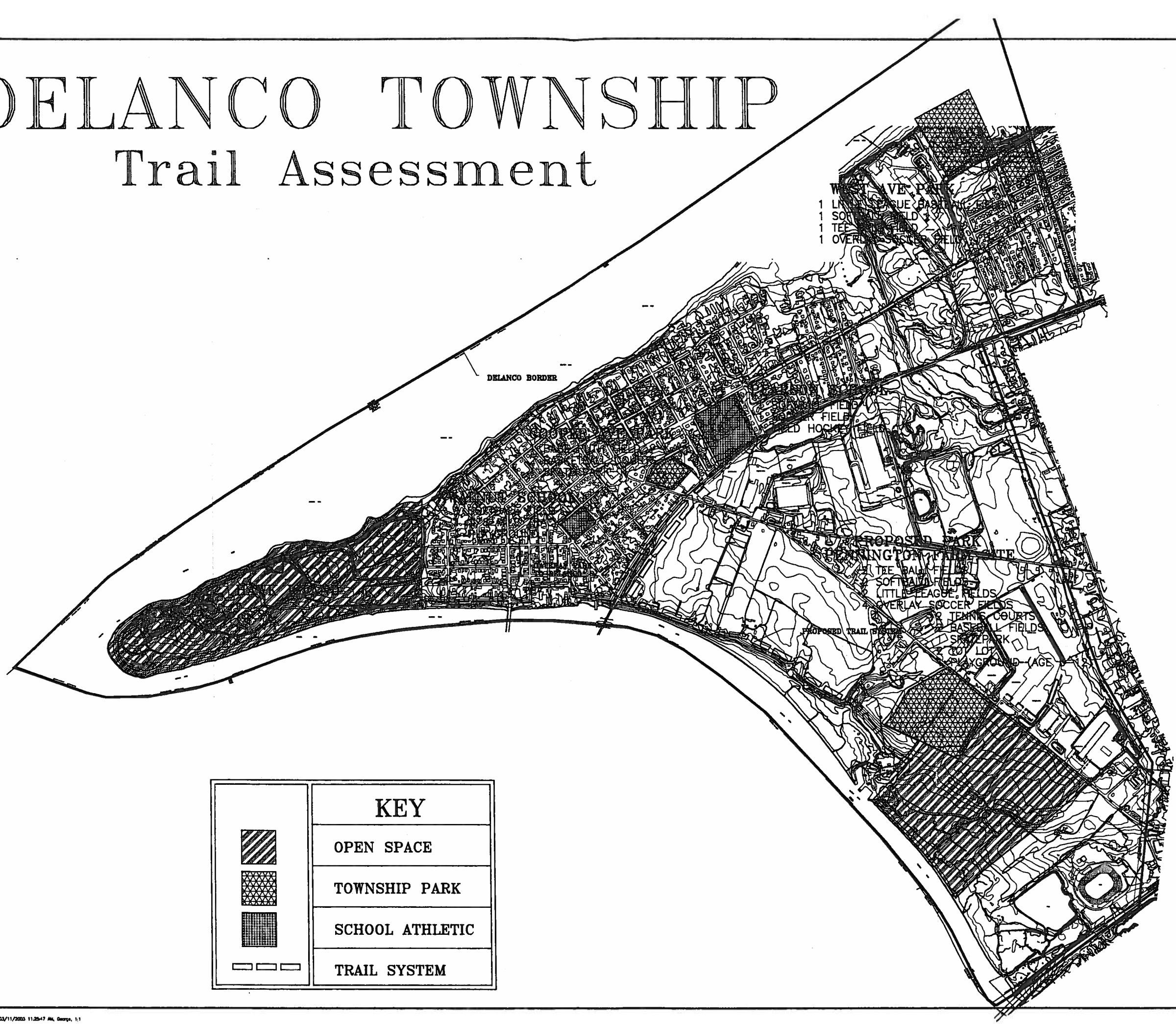
III. CONCLUSION

Delanco's accessibility off of Route 130 and its situation along two waterways provide the Township park system with a unique advantage to create a park system fully utilized by residents, both local and countywide.

The conceptual plan for the Delanco Township Park System includes both passive and active uses that will encourage its utilization by the residents. The site's unique features, such as its location, scenic views of the Delaware and Rancocas, and terrain, must be considered in order to take full advantage of the potential of each park located within the Township.

DELANCO TOWNSHIP

Trail Assessment



KEY
OPEN SPACE
TOWNSHIP PARK
SCHOOL ATHLETIC
TRAIL SYSTEM

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