



Ed Pawlowski, Mayor

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Dear Neighbor of the Cedar Creek Parkway:

The City of Allentown is so fortunate to have such a beautiful and expansive park system for everyone to enjoy. Our park system is the envy of the region, and we are working hard to make sure the crown jewel of the city does not lose its luster. Our goal is to enhance, preserve and update our parks so they can be safely enjoyed by everyone today and by future generations.

To that end, we have worked with City Council to approve a \$3.8 million dollar Capital Project Improvement Program to renovate and improve parks throughout the city. ALL of these funds have been secured through grants from the Harry C. Trexler Trust, Lehigh County, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the federal government.

In 2006, a City-Wide Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan was completed with the assistance of the Trexler Trust (you can find the plan at www.gfnet.com/aprmp).

In 2007, the newest park in our system, the Arts Park was completed. In 2008, renovations to West Park, Allentown's oldest park, were accomplished. Currently, we are working on renovations and restoration of various parks across the city (Keck, Stevens, Jordon, Roosevelt, Irving, Alton, Trout Nursery) concurrently and one of the city's largest parks, the Cedar Creek Parkway.

Over the last several years, we have done our best to encourage input, address concerns, and establish support from our citizens for our parks as we diligently work to better our park system. Yet there are still some who have concerns and questions that have arisen due to misinformation that has been propagated concerning the proposed renovations of Cedar Creek park.

Enclosed is more information about the Cedar Creek Parkway project so that you may be better informed.

If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact the Department of Parks & Recreation at 610-437-7750. **Also, please join us on Thursday, August 13th at 6:00pm in City Council Chambers for a special meeting with City Council to outline the city's planning efforts to date and answer any questions concerning the park renovations.**

Thank you for your concern and interest in our great city and the improvement of our parks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Pawlowski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "P" and "W".

Mayor Ed Pawlowski

CEDAR CREEK PARKWAY RENOVATION PLAN

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Why is the Cedar Creek Parkway being renovated?

A: The Cedar Creek Parkway is one of the city's largest parks and is heavily used for special events on a regular basis. The popularity of the park and the special events that are held there are taking a toll on the park's resources and facilities. It has been years since the park has seen any capital improvements.

In its current condition:

- The park infrastructure lacks the capacity to handle current demands and needs improvements. Deteriorating facilities such as restrooms, pavilions, the Cedar Beach pool, the walls of the Rose Garden reflective ponds built in the 1930s, and three aging pedestrian bridges are examples of the need for infrastructure improvements. Sewage and electrical systems are particularly challenged during significant storm events and large special events in the park.

- Our ever-popular picnic pavilions, used by families and civic organizations are in desperate need of repair.

- Not all park facilities are compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards. Walkway improvements at the Rose Garden and the new children's playground will address this and will add to the park's compliance with these standards.

- Lake Muhlenberg, the ponds at the Rose Garden, and Cedar Creek's ecologic health and water quality are suffering from erosion and sediment build-up. All need attention with consideration given to environmental steps that can be taken to alleviate these problems. At the same time we will provide a natural habitat for park users that are attractive while safeguarding these important waterways for fish and wildlife activity. Most importantly, these waterways are part of the Allentown watershed.

- Prime activity areas lack social amenities such as improved restrooms and adequate parking. Both will be improved.

- In addition, park facilities are not meeting the recreation demands of the Allentown community, lacking activities for citizens of all ages, interests, and abilities.

Q: How was the renovation plan developed and what steps did you take to involve the public in the process?

A: The Cedar Creek Parkway Renovation Plan began in June of 2007 by the City and Trexler Trust to define needed improvements and explore possible enhancements. The plan was built upon the outcomes of the City-Wide Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan to address key issues.

Citizen, existing user group and park and city staff input was gathered to create a plan that considers the needs of the casual user, sports enthusiasts, as well as visitors to the many special events held annually in the park.

Public meetings were advertised and the plan was placed on the City of Allentown website. More than 40 key person interviews were conducted and more than 20 different organizations submitted comments or held meetings with the project team.

The draft renovation plan was displayed in City Hall and the Department of Parks and Recreation offices for over one year and residents were encouraged to provide input. The plan was also published in 'Adventure Allentown', where 80,000 copies were distributed city-wide through the Morning Call, sent home with more than 14,500 school students and placed in various parks and other locations (libraries, county offices, city offices, public and private schools, daycare facilities, etc.) throughout the City.

Throughout this planning process, numerous comments were received via email and phone. In addition, a pre-renovation survey was conducted with the assistance of Penn State University's Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management. More than 400 residents were surveyed as part of this study. The complete report can be found on the City's project website at www.allentownpa.gov.

From this process a renovation plan evolved that restores and enhances existing features in a manner that retains the

park's traditional setting and includes recreation features to entice new users. The plan promotes water quality and flood protection with planted riparian buffers along Cedar Creek; renovates key features such as the picnic grove and pavilions, provides needed park upgrades to meet the accessibility requirements of the ADA and introduces new facilities such as a playground for children with disabilities and a senior citizen fitness trail.





Picnic Grove and Activity Lawn

Q: What does the renovation plan recommend and what will be included in Phase I improvements?

A: The renovation plan for the Cedar Creek Parkway defined the following goals to guide park improvements:

1. Highlight and enhance the park's unique features: The Rose Garden, The Old Fashion Garden, and Lake Muhlenberg,
2. Provide a diverse variety of recreation opportunities to serve people of differing ages, interests, and abilities,
3. Protect and enhance the natural resources of the site,
4. Provide trails for recreation and fitness throughout the park and beyond to link to nearby recreation sites,
5. Improve the park for special events.

The renovation plan is an overall vision for park improvements, not the end result.

The First Phase of development includes:

- **Installation of a playground with features for children of all abilities.** The playground was designed with the support of parents of children with disabilities. An important motivation in providing this active venue was a report that 48% of the children in Allentown are considered overweight or obese. The playground includes the newest in technology and also a youth fitness trail that was designed to draw and encourage children to play and exercise.

- **Expanded and enhanced trail system.** The trails will be renovated and bike lanes will be designated. This will help reduce impacts from flooding, provide a stable surface for

bikes, strollers, and wheelchairs, as well as allowing the trails to be cleared of snow and open for year round use. Lighting will be added along the main trail to enhance safety and security.

- **Picnic pavilions, used by families and civic organizations will be renovated.** The existing picnic pavilions will be replaced by four new stone pillar structures that will reflect the unique history and character of the park.

- **The Rose Garden will be renovated and restored.** New walkways at the Rose Garden & Old Fashioned Garden will be added to make the site accessible for people with disabilities. The size of the gardens and rose beds will remain the same. New trellises will be added to enhance the setting and replace the existing deteriorating structures. New stone columns between the gazebos will serve as a new arbor into the garden for small ceremonies and photo opportunities. The reflecting ponds will be restored. The stone walls built in the 1930s have decayed and crumbled. We have restored the walls and will refill the reflective ponds with water, fish and aquatic plants.

- **Replacement of three deteriorated pedestrian bridges.**

- **Introduction of a vegetative buffer along Cedar Creek to reduce flooding.** New natural vegetation and flowers along Cedar Creek will help to reduce flood impacts, enhance water quality and promote reduction of sediment entering the stream.



Wedding Pavilion at the Rose Garden

Q: The park is prone to flooding, what is the City doing to address this problem?

A: The proposed improvements respect the existing flood prone areas within the park. New natural vegetation and flowers along Cedar Creek will help to reduce flood impacts. Improving park trails will lessen the damage to the trails and reduce sediment reaching Lake Muhlenberg. An innovative storm water management system will be incorporated into the design to address the proposed improvements, promote groundwater recharge, and reduce overall storm water flow to the creek. No new facilities are proposed within the park's floodplain.



Gateway to Cedar Creek Playground



Q: Parking is always an issue at the park, how does the City plan to address this problem?

A: While routine, daily parking is generally accommodated within the park, special events and summer weekends can overburden the existing facilities. The Phase I plan does not include any new parking lots, but rather reconfigures and properly stripes (no striping currently exists) the existing lots to allow for more parking spaces. No additional surface lots will be added to the park in the first phase. In addition, a new crosswalk is being installed on Ott Street to connect the two portions of the park for safe bicyclists and pedestrian crossing. Finally the bridge on Ott Street is being renovated and the City is working to add pedestrian crosswalks on Hamilton Street and Parkway Boulevard in the near future.

Q: What will the new handicapped accessible playground entail?

A: Installation of a playground with features for children of all abilities will be installed at the eastern end of the park near the current basketball courts and pool facilities. The playground was designed with the support of parents of children with disabilities. *There has been some confusion regarding the size of the playground and its capacity.* The playground will be larger since it will have more play equipment than a traditional park, to accommodate children with disabilities and children without so each can enjoy the park and play side by side. The playground will also include the newest play technology and a youth fitness trail designed to encourage children to play and exercise. No trees will be removed to accommodate the building of this playground.

Q: How does the City plan to address increased trash, noise and other issues at the park?

A: The City believes investment in the park will promote increased appreciation and stewardship. Proposed improvements such as renovation of the trails and providing a natural vegetative buffer along the creek will reduce long term maintenance and improve the appearance of the park. City crews will continue to operate and maintain the park in a first class manner.

Q: What is the timetable for completion of Phase I improvements?

A: The project will continue through the remainder of 2009 and into 2010. Depending on the weather, the City hopes to have Phase I improvements completed by May 2010.

Q: In these tough economic times, where is the funding coming from to renovate the park?

A: Phase I is being funded through \$1.8 million in grants provided by the Harry C. Trexler Trust, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Lehigh County Green Futures Fund. No city tax dollars will be used to complete any of the above mentioned park renovations.

Q: How can I find out more information?

A: The City created a project website at www.allentownpa.org. Once on the site, go to the Department of Parks & Recreation home page and click on the Cedar Creek Parkway logo. You can also sign up for email updates.

A special meeting to explain park improvements will be held on Thursday, August 13th at 6:00pm in City Council Chambers and you are encouraged to attend.

Friends of the Allentown Parks, a new non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, has been established and we encourage you to join and help us shape the future of parks and recreation in Allentown. To find out more, please visit www.friendsoftheallentownparks.org.



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