

**MARCH 2026  
DRAFT**



# **LANCASTER COUNTY PARKS & TRAILS MASTER PLAN:**

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Warwick to Ephrata Rail Trail (WERT). Source: Lancaster County

# 01

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Chickies Rock. Source: Susquehanna National Heritage Area.

# INTRODUCTION

**Lancaster County is one of the fastest growing counties in Pennsylvania. The County is recognized for its world-class farmland, vibrant urban places, and quality natural resources.**

**The County balances continued development pressure with long-standing commitments to agricultural preservation and natural resource protection. The distribution of open space and trails underscores the challenges of ensuring equitable access to parks and recreation as growth continues across urban, suburban, and rural areas.**

# PLAN BACKGROUND

In 2024, Lancaster County issued a request for proposals for an updated parks and trails master plan to guide the development of a cohesive parks, trails and open space system to complement these past plans and meet the desires of Lancaster County residents. In 2025 to early 2026, a consultant team guided the creation of the plan, consisting of resident input, coordination with local parks and open space partners, and development of policies and concepts that would guide the development of admirable open space resources for the next ten years, and possibly beyond.

Prior to this plan, Lancaster County's parks and trails plan had not been updated since 1992. Since that time, many changes in the provision of outdoor recreation had occurred. The Lancaster Conservancy had stepped into a significant role as a provider of passive recreation experiences in the county, having purchased thousands of acres of natural lands for public use, primarily along the Susquehanna River corridor.

Meanwhile, rural sprawl has impaired opportunities for Lancaster County to add to its core County parks. At present, there is a lack of large parcels of forested land significant enough to warrant purchase, and land costs are prohibitively high to justify purchase amid constrained budgets.

Regional, long-distance multi-use recreation trails are popular and well-used, but are owned and managed by a wide range of entities and municipalities, making management difficult and long-term upkeep challenging.

The County increasingly plays an essential coordination role among these various landowners and management entities, rather than the owner and manager of park acres, per se. However, this coordination role is still critical to achieving a cohesive and usable network.

## Plan Components

In order to respond to these needs and a set a foundation for a robust system of parks and trails, this planning process included:

- Revisiting the park service standards from 1992 Plan to determine if the 5 acres per 1000 people is the appropriate level of service for the County
- Assessing the needs of the current population
- Align the plan with areas of population growth
- Identifying potential areas of County-owned park improvement and investment that aligned with community priorities and ecological opportunities
- Developing concepts for priority trail connections that align with community priorities and promote countywide connectivity
- Establish avenues for working with local nonprofits, government agencies, and other partners to collectively grow open space resources and capacity.

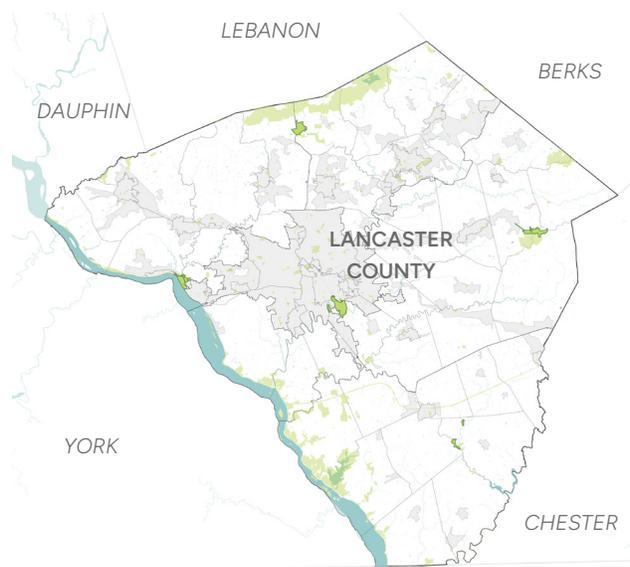


Figure 1.1: Lancaster County Context. Source: PASDA, U.S. Census Bureau 2025.



Pequa Creek along the Conestoga Trail. Source: Lancaster County.



Northwest River Trail. Source: Lancaster County.

## THE BENEFITS OF COUNTYWIDE PARKS & TRAIL NETWORKS

The plan aims to emphasize the value of parks and open space, as well as the broad advantages that investing in these assets can deliver to the County and its residents. These include, but are not limited to:

- » **Enhanced quality of life** for Lancaster County residents of all backgrounds
- » **Improved health** of residents, brought about by access to the outdoors and increased opportunities for active lifestyles and exercise
- » Opportunities for **community cohesion** through the gathering opportunities that parks and recreational assets provide
- » **Economic development** via the outdoor recreation economy
- » Enviable **real estate value** for properties connected to or adjacent to high-quality parks, trails and open space resources
- » Protection and enhancement of **biodiversity**
- » **Environmental education** and skill-building opportunities in parks, open spaces, and along trails
- » Alternative transportation routes via trails, **improving air quality and reducing traffic congestion**
- » **Workforce attraction and business retention** for businesses located in the County, whose employees make use of the outdoor economy.



Drone photo from House Rock Overlook at Clark Nature Preserve.  
Source: Lancaster Conservancy (Credit: Gregory Smolin)



Northwest River Trail. Source:  
Lancaster County (Credit: Brian  
Donnelly).



Clark Nature Preserve.  
Source: Lancaster Conservancy (Credit: Nick Gould)



Susquehanna River Paddling. Source: KayakLancCo.

# PLAN GOALS

Throughout the planning process, public input, demographic data, level of service analyses, and the evaluation of countywide management and fundraising strategies resulted in seven plan goals. These goals form the backbone of the policies that the County will follow to implement the plan in the years to come. The chapters that follow step through the research and analysis, public input, and illustrate how the goals were formed. The full list of goals, policies, and actions is in Chapter 5.

## GROWTH

Ensure the availability of sufficient and accessible county parkland to meet the current and future recreational needs of Lancaster County residents, in alignment with projected population growth.



## ACCESS

Enhance access and multimodal opportunities to outdoor recreation opportunities to meet the needs and improve the wellbeing of all county residents.



## ECONOMY

Leverage outdoor recreation resources to expand business and job opportunities, to attract tourists, and to improve the economic health and vitality of Lancaster County communities.



## CONNECTIONS

Connect the land and water trail networks to enhance connectivity to urban areas, access points and other trail and transportation systems.



## NATURE

Protect and restore natural resource systems—waterways, wildlife habitat, and core forests—within and adjacent to parks and trails.



## INVESTMENT

Invest in existing and proposed parks and trails, advocating for permanent protection.



## ADVOCACY

Enhance management of parks and trails by local communities and organizations to support and increase recreational opportunities.



# 02

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Tubing at Sickmans Mill Outfitters. Source: Susquehanna National Heritage Area.

# BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The Background and Context chapter establishes the foundation for the Parks and Trails Master Plan by situating it within Lancaster County’s history of parks, open space, transportation, and conservation planning, alongside an analysis of current and future demographic trends.

It highlights how earlier county, municipal, and regional plans shaped today’s priorities around coordinated park systems, greenways, partnerships, and a 5-acres-per-1,000-residents level-of-service (LOS) benchmark that continues to inform investment decisions.

# PLANNING TO DATE

Prior to completing the Parks and Trails Master Plan (PTMP), Lancaster County and other outdoor recreation providers had created plans that helped shape the current plan. Aspects of these have been referenced or incorporated into the policies or design concepts for this plan, and the community input that shaped them. While many documents were reviewed as part of this process, the plans highlighted and summarized below represent those most critical to informing the PTMP's direction and recommendations.

## County Parks and Trails Plan

- » Central and Buchmiller Parks Master Plan
- » Chickies Rock County Park Master Plan, 1989

## State and Regional Plans

- » Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan, 2020-2024
- » Greenscapes: The Green Infrastructure Element, 2009
- » South Central Pennsylvania Trails Connectivity Assessment, 2023-2024
- » Pennsylvania Greenways, 2001
- » Pennsylvania Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan: Recreation for All, 2020-2024
- » Chester County Trails Master Plan, 2024

## Lancaster County Plans

- » Greenscapes: The Green Infrastructure Element, 2009
- » Lancaster County Regional Open Space Plan, 1992
- » Lancaster Active Transportation Plan, 2019
- » Places2040, 2018
- » Lancaster County MPO Traffic Safety Action Plan, 2025

## Municipal Plans

- » Our Future Lancaster: A Comprehensive Plan for the City of Lancaster, PA, 2023
- » Bridgeport Crossroads: Transportation and Land Use Study, 2021
- » Conestoga Pines Park and Walnut Street Fishing Area Master Plan, 2024
- » EDC Economic Development Plan, 2025

## Non-profit, COG, and Private Plans

- » Conestoga River Water Trail Access Improvement Plan, 2023
- » Conestoga Greenways: A River Corridor Conservation Plan, 1999
- » EDC Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan, 2025
- » Hidden in Plain Sight: Unlocking the Conestoga River's Social and Economic Potential, 2018



Conestoga River kayaking. Source: Conestoga River Club.



IN 1992, THE COUNTY SET A TARGET OF **5 ACRES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS** AS THE GUIDING LEVEL OF SERVICE FOR COUNTY-OWNED PARKLAND.

## Lancaster County

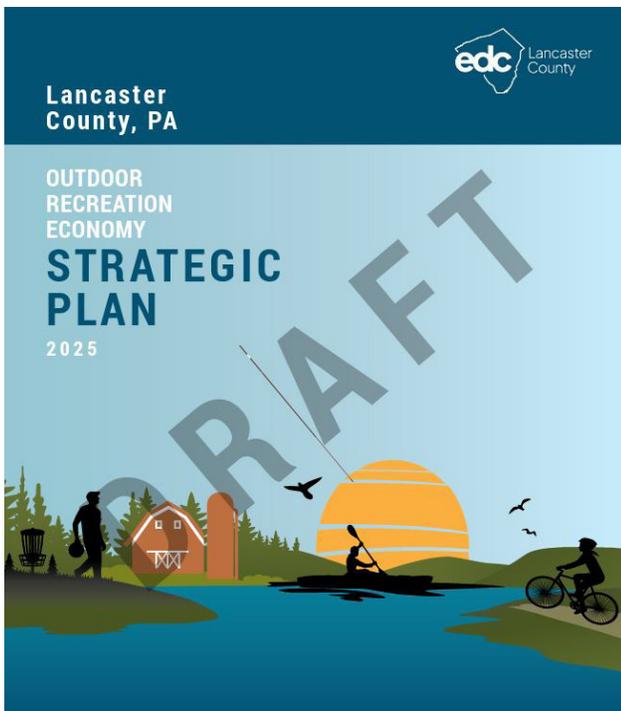
### Lancaster County Regional Open Space Plan, 1992

The Lancaster County Regional Open Space Plan (1992) was adopted on August 12, 1992 as an amendment to the County's comprehensive plan, responding to growth pressures and the recognition that only a small portion of the county's land was publicly accessible for outdoor recreation at the time.

The 1992 Plan's central vision looked toward a countywide open space system built around three interconnected components: a Regional Park System, a Natural Heritage Preservation System, and a Greenway System.

The 1992 Plan emphasized implementation through organizational coordination and public/private partnerships, including leveraging a County funding strategy to support both countywide acquisitions and local park efforts.

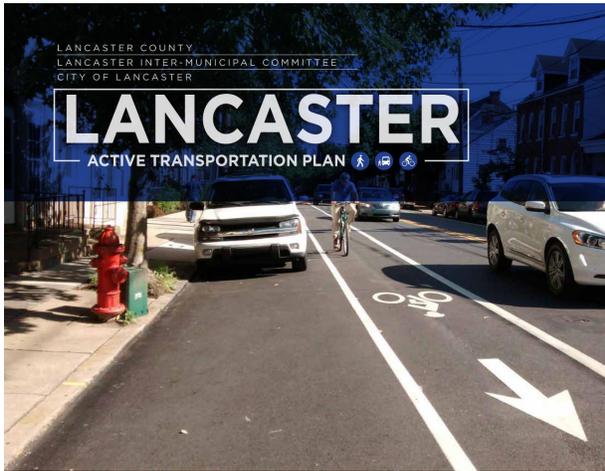
The 1992 Plan also established a Level of Service (LOS) guideline of 5 acres per 1,000 residents for county-owned parkland, providing a benchmark to evaluate parkland supply and guide future acquisition and investment decisions. Assessing if this standard was still appropriate to the current needs of Lancaster County was central to the impetus for this 2026 plan.



## EDC, Lancaster County

### Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan, 2025

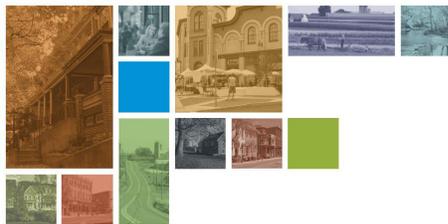
The Lancaster County Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan (ORESP) outlines a countywide strategy to strengthen local businesses, communities, and quality of life by positioning outdoor recreation as a core economic driver. The plan highlights the county's extensive natural lands, trail network, and waterways as foundational to attracting visitors, supporting local businesses, and enhancing community vitality. It also identifies the need for improved connectivity, maintenance, and coordinated management.



## Lancaster County

### Active Transportation Plan, 2019

The 2019 Lancaster Active Transportation Plan is a countywide blueprint for making it easier and safer to get around Lancaster County by walking, biking, and other forms of transit. It establishes a vision for an interconnected network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities to link neighborhoods, jobs, schools, parks, and trailheads. The current plan references routes and concepts for linking multi-modal transportation across the county that were developed as a part of this plan.



## Lancaster County

### Places2040, 2018

Adopted in October 2018, Places2040 serves as the County's official countywide comprehensive plan. It provides the overarching framework for the PTMP, which seeks to align with the plan's overarching priorities of managing growth, creating better connections, and investing in the County's parks, trails, and natural area systems. Places2040 also identified that the County was falling behind in park and recreation standards and noted the importance of creating a well-connected countywide network of trails and natural areas while preserving rural

## South Central Pennsylvania Trails Connectivity Assessment

2023 - 2024



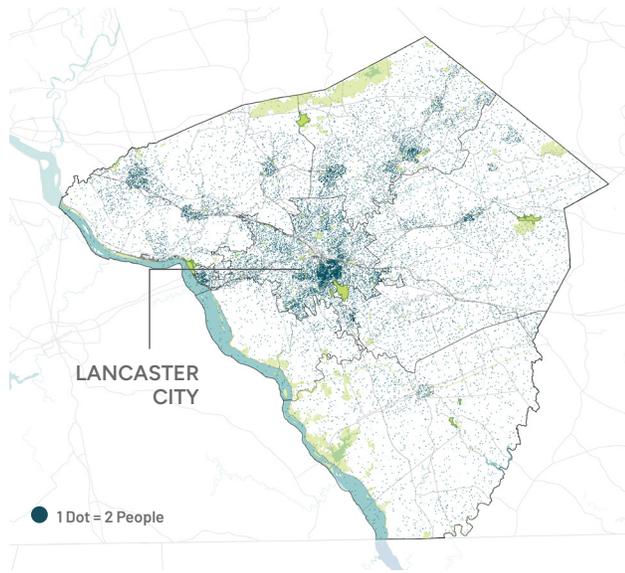
## South Central Pennsylvania

### South Central Pennsylvania Trails Connectivity Assessment, 2023-24

The South Central Pennsylvania Trails Connectivity Assessment (2023-2024) is a regional planning report produced through the Central Pennsylvania Trails Initiative (CPTI) and led by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC). It evaluates existing multi-purpose trail corridors and active trail development across seven counties: Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lebanon, Lancaster, and York. The plan encourages a more connected trail network that better serves both recreation and active transportation over the long term.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

A critical part of setting the table for the PTMP is understanding the current composition of Lancaster County residents. Understanding local demographics is essential to determining how parks, trails and open spaces can best serve current and future residents.



## Population Density

The County's residents are heavily concentrated in the central "Metro" area, specifically around Lancaster City. Population density generally follows the established growth area boundaries. Outside of the urbanized area, population is more dispersed across suburban and rural municipalities.

Figure 2.1: Population Density Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



East Donegal Township's Riverfront Park. Source: Lancaster County.

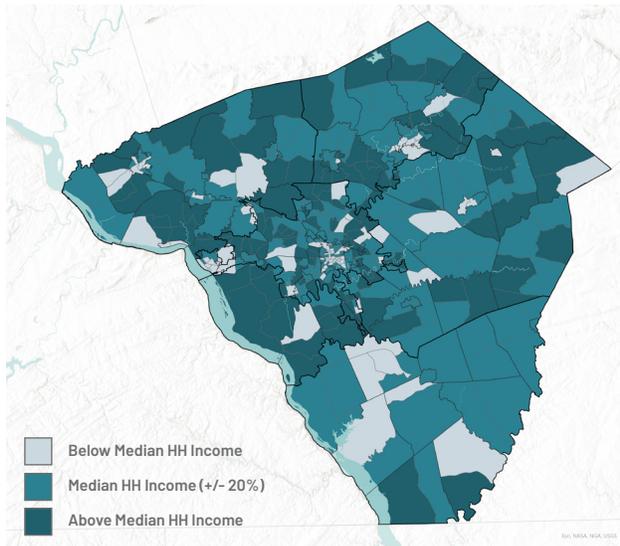


Figure 2.2: Median HH Income. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Median Household Income

Median Household Income helps planners understand how parks, trails and open space resources are distributed, so that future amenities can service residents of all income levels – not just the most affluent. Most of the County falls at or above the countywide median household income (\$79,558 in 2023 inflation-adjusted dollars), indicating a generally strong economic base. Lower-income households are more prevalent in parts of the Metro and in some of the more rural areas of the County in the southern and eastern portions.

**MOST COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS ARE AT OR ABOVE THE MEDIAN INCOME OF \$79,558 AND MOST RESIDENTS ARE BETWEEN 18- 50 YEARS OLD**

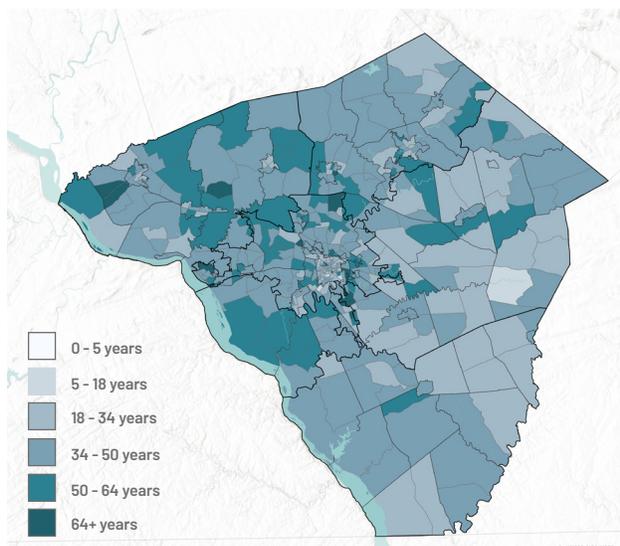


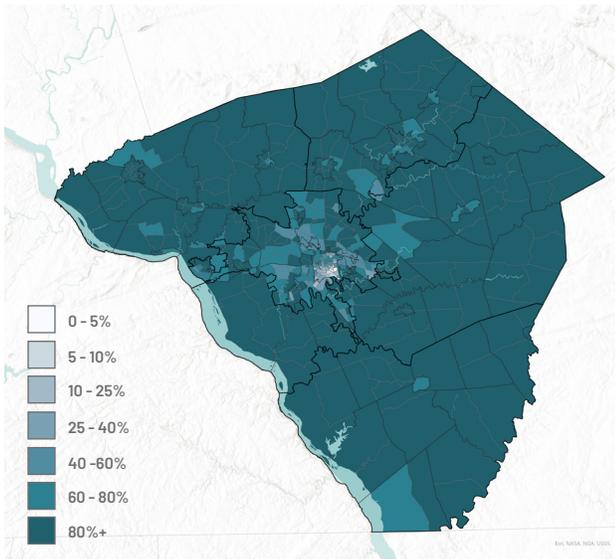
Figure 2.3: Median Age. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Median Age

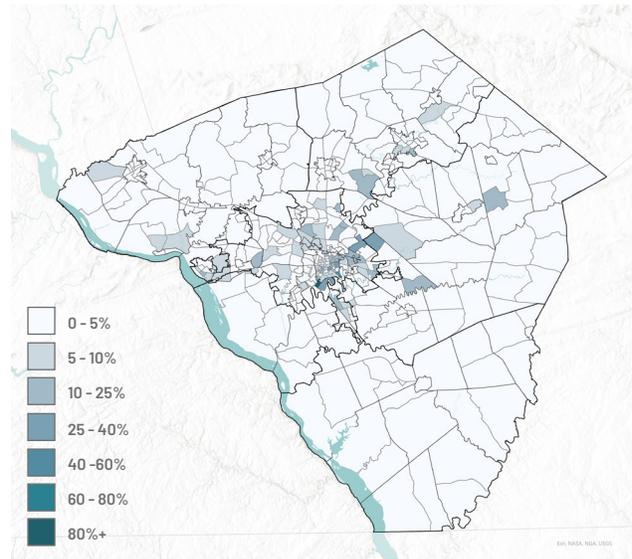
Age is critical to parks, trails and open space planning, as different age groups use recreational assets differently. The majority of County residents fall between 18 and 50 years old, with the Metro trending younger than the rest of the County. This age distribution supports continued investment in trails, active recreation, and multi-use park amenities that serve working-age adults, families, and youth, while still planning for an aging population in more rural areas.

## Race/Ethnicity

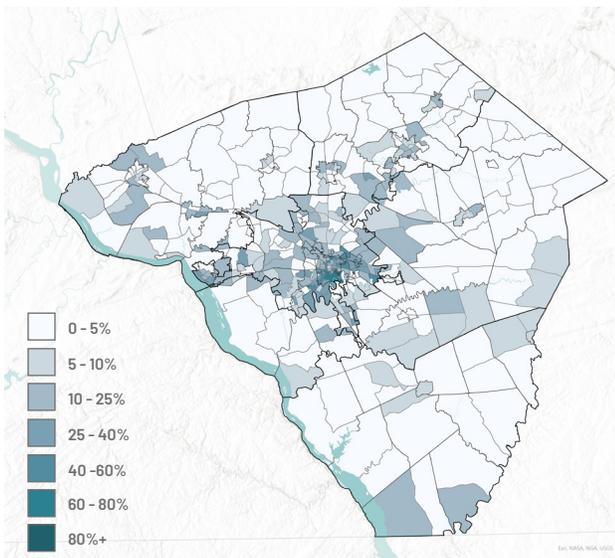
An inclusive parks, trails and recreation system aims to serve residents of all backgrounds, and accommodate the preferences of each through programming, geographically-distributed access and other considerations. With the exception of Lancaster City, most municipalities across the county are predominantly white, particularly in rural and suburban areas. Higher percentages of Black residents are concentrated in urbanized areas and in the eastern edges of the county, while Hispanic and Latino populations are most prominent in and around Lancaster City. There is a small concentration of Asian populations also in the central urbanized area and in some suburban municipalities.



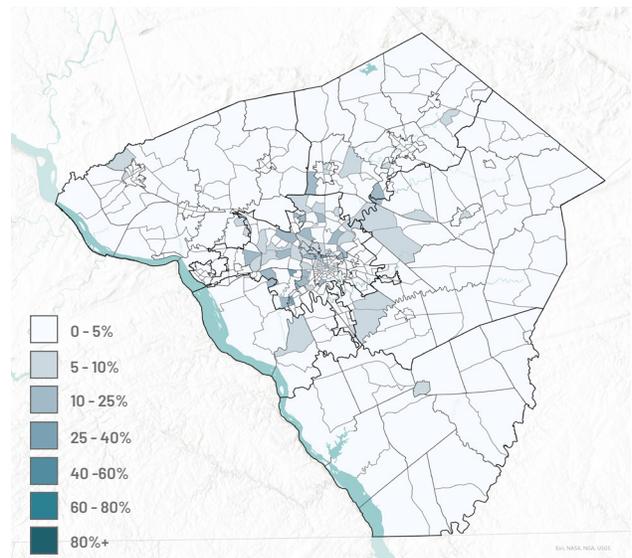
**Figure 2.4: Percentage of White Residents.** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



**Figure 2.5: Percentage of Black Residents.** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



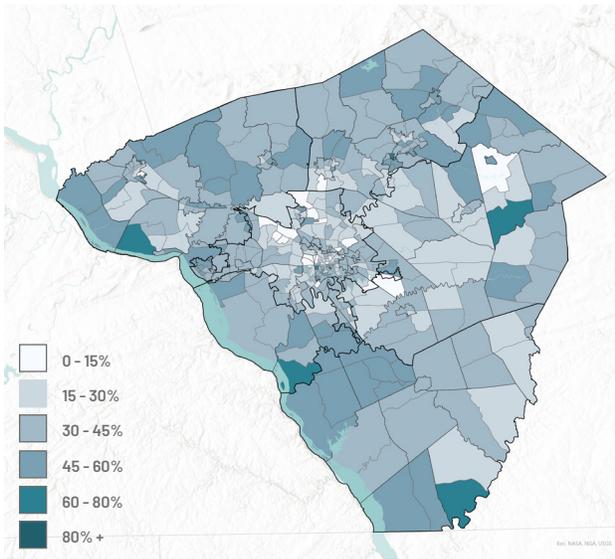
**Figure 2.6: Percentage of Hispanic/ Latino Residents.** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



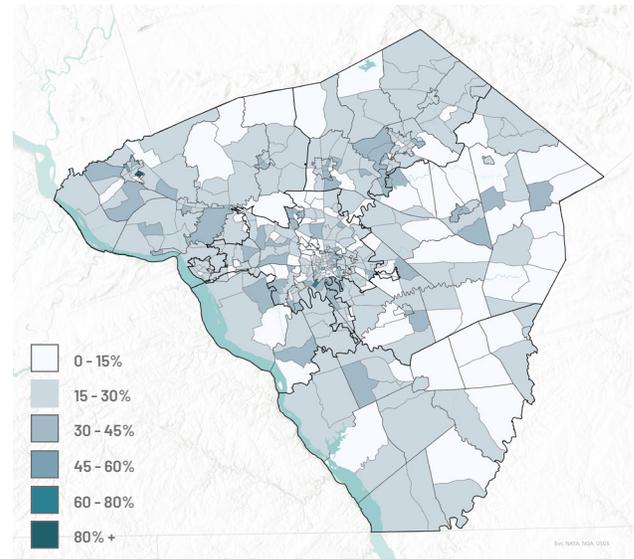
**Figure 2.7: Percentage of Asian Residents.** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Educational Attainment

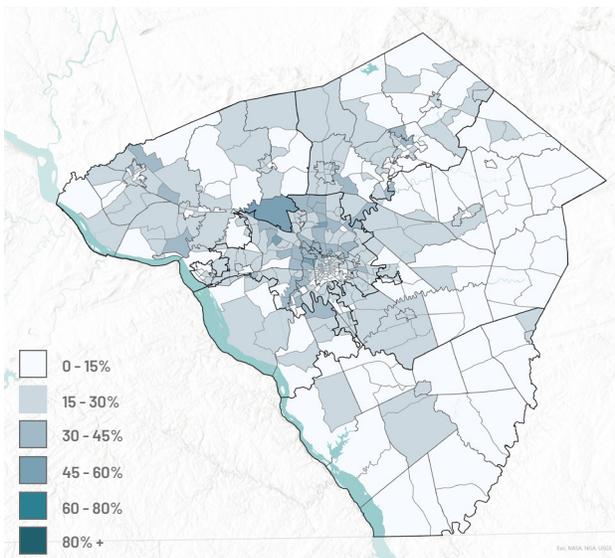
Educational attainment helps give a window into household characteristics and preferences. Generally, Lancaster County residents have some form of education. High school/GED and/or some college attainment is widespread across the county with some variation by planning area. Bachelor's degree attainment is more concentrated in the urbanized areas and some select suburban areas, while advanced degree attainment is comparatively limited.



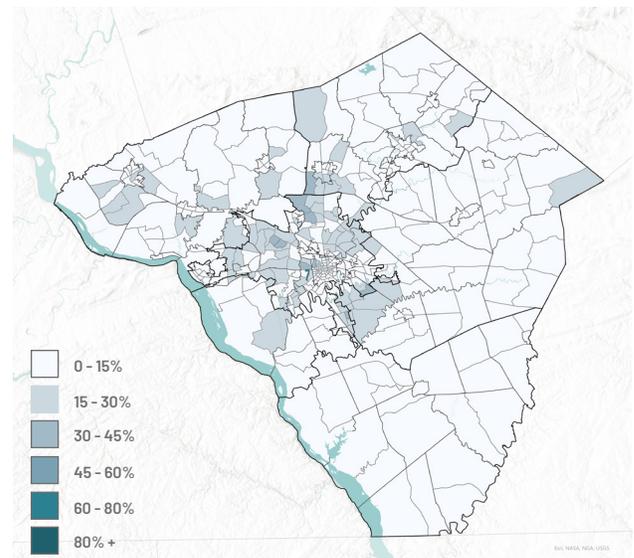
**Figure 2.8: High School/GED (as percentage of population).** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



**Figure 2.9: Some college (as percentage of population).** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



**Figure 2.10: Bachelors Degree (as percentage of population).** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



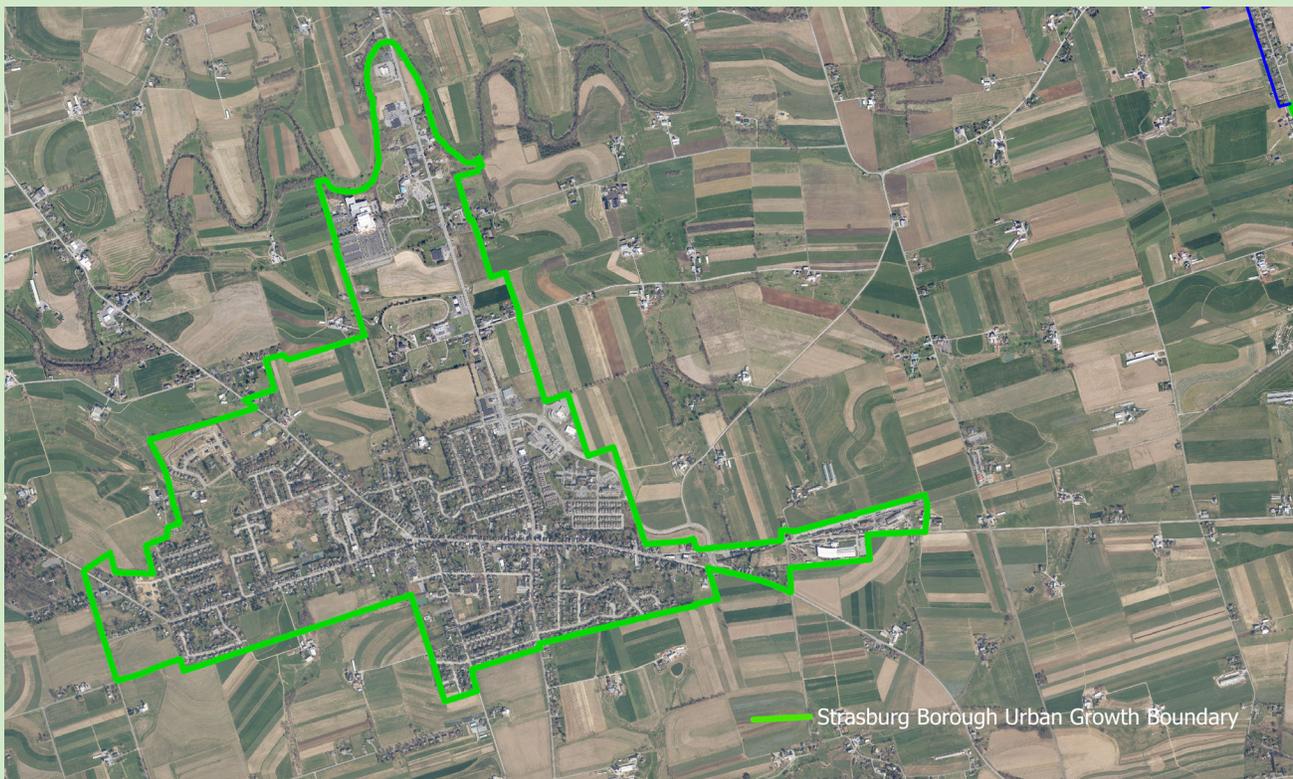
**Figure 2.11: Advanced Degree (as percentage of population).** Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## GROWTH AREA

The Growth Area (GA) is the County's long-standing growth management approach which was developed to focus development in areas and reduce outward sprawl that can encroach on agricultural land and natural resources. It is a countywide program that features 13 GAs and involves 43 municipalities, explicitly intended to concentrate growth in these places with (or anticipating) public services and infrastructure.

The GAs were established adjacent to historic centers of development using a collaborative model with municipalities. Over the years, this growth framework has been updated through various county planning efforts such as Places2040. The County Planning Department has undertaken a growth area recalibration process to revisit boundaries that were set decades ago.

Today, the GAs shape the County's land use patterns, from urbanized development to agricultural lands. It also complements a rural strategy that conserves farmlands and natural areas, which is a defining characteristic of the county. As Lancaster anticipates future growth in population and density of development, this strategy helps comprehensive planning, zoning, and capital development by encouraging investment and infill in these designated areas.



Strasburg Borough Growth Boundary. Source: Lancaster County.

# POPULATION PROJECTIONS

For population projections, the same six planning areas established by the Lancaster County Planning Commission were used. These areas helped ensure geographic distribution of parkland. Those planning areas are Northeast, Northwest, East, West, South, and Metro. Population projections from the Lancaster County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) were used for this analysis.

## Population Growth: 2000 - 2020

Between 2000 and 2020, most of the population growth in the county was concentrated around the Metro area, with small pockets of high growth in the Northwest, Northeast, and South areas. Outside of the Metro area, there more incremental growth occurred.

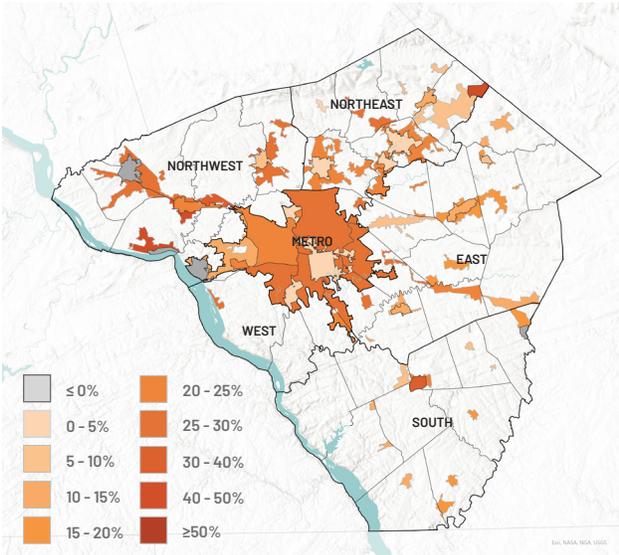


Figure 2.12: Areas of High Growth 2000 - 2020. Source: Lancaster County.

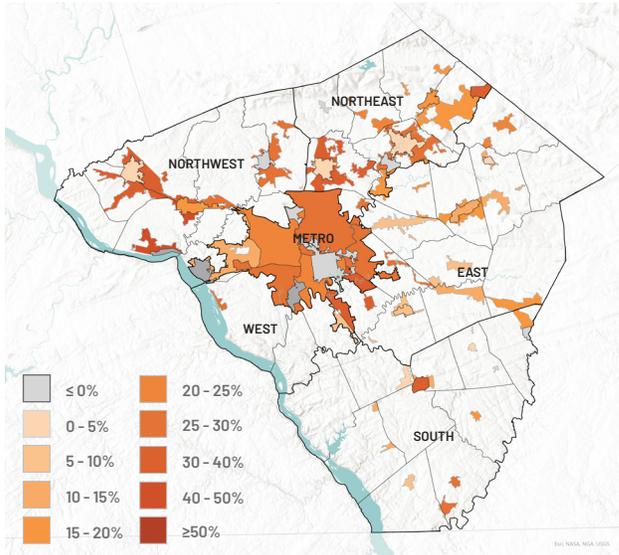


Figure 2.13: Areas of High Projected Growth 2020 - 2040. Source: Lancaster County.

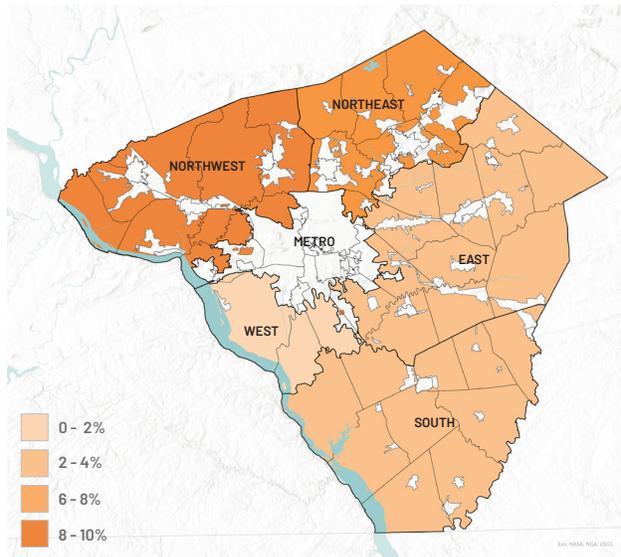


Figure 2.14: Areas of High Projected Growth outside of GA 2020 - 2040. Source: Lancaster County.

## Population Growth: 2020 - 2040

From 2020 to 2040, projected growth trends remain similar to previous years with the most concentrated change occurring in the Metro area. Municipalities along key corridors in the Northwest are also projected to see higher growth change, suggesting continued expansion from the existing urbanized centers.

In the non-GA areas, growth is comparatively limited. The Northeast and Northwest areas will see most population growth outside of the GA, while other planning areas see relatively low growth.

Taken together, the population projections for both the GA and non-GA areas reinforce the need for more connections, trail access, and parkland investments where the greatest share of new residents and development will be located.

# 03



Columbia Crossing. Source: Susquehanna National Heritage Area.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

Lancaster County's parks, trails and open spaces contribute to the enviable sense of place and quality of life for which the county is known. This rich open space network is owned and managed by the County itself, as well as by other entities like the Lancaster Conservancy, PA Game Commission, or one of the county's sixty municipalities. The focus of this plan is on the County-owned parks, and the county-wide trail network, however, collaborating, communicating with, and convening these other entities is core to the mission of the County's governance, and to the goals of this plan. The following chapter describes the existing state of parks, trails and open space across the county, with a focus on County-owned assets, determining the park system's level of service, and other data and analysis the County can use to plan for the future.

# EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

**Lancaster County has a robust system of parks totaling over 29,000 acres across 657 parks and open space areas.**

The 1,907 acres of County-owned parks form the backbone of the public park system, providing destinations for visitors and residents alike that offer a mix of active recreation, trails, natural areas, and programmed amenities.

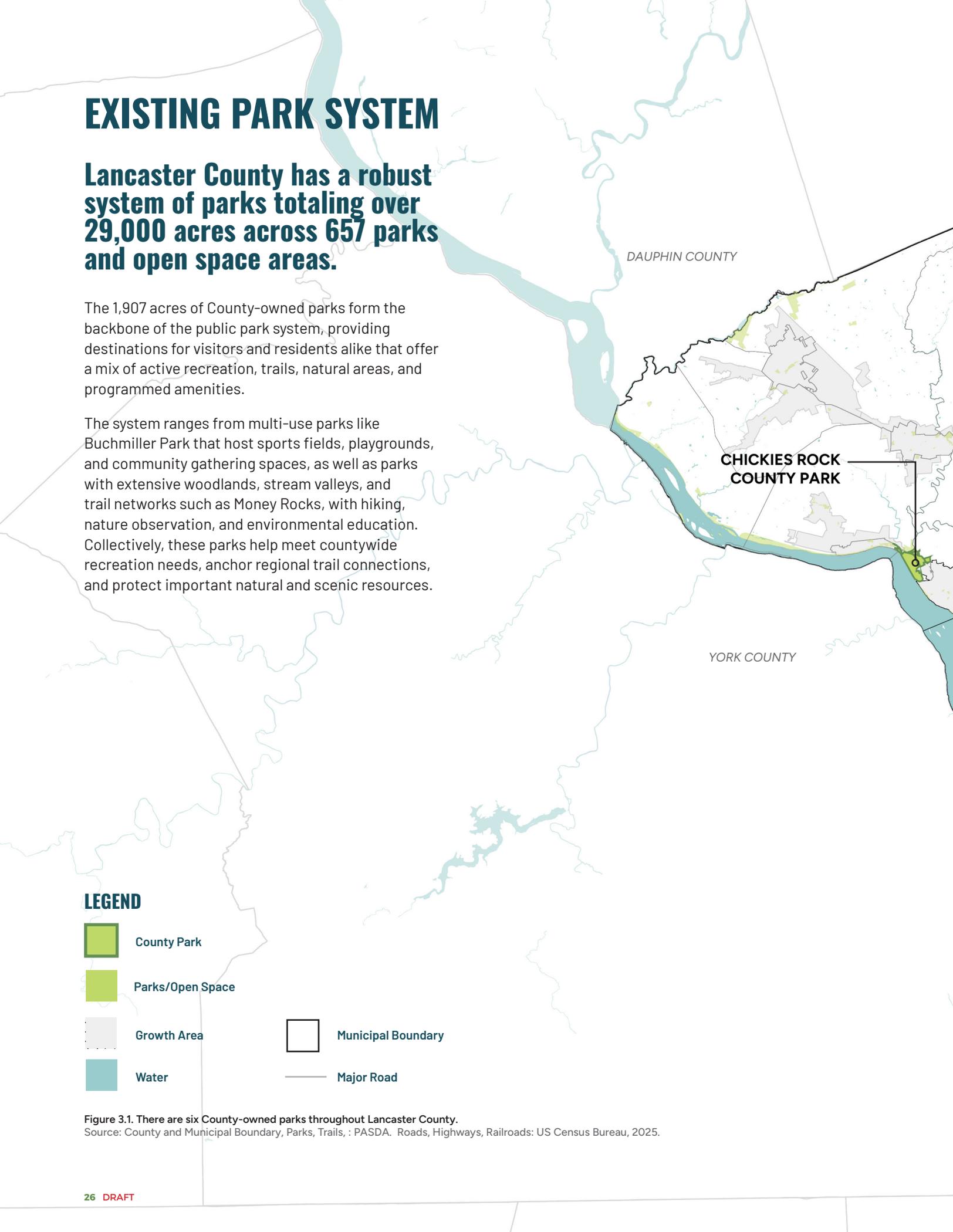
The system ranges from multi-use parks like Buchmiller Park that host sports fields, playgrounds, and community gathering spaces, as well as parks with extensive woodlands, stream valleys, and trail networks such as Money Rocks, with hiking, nature observation, and environmental education. Collectively, these parks help meet countywide recreation needs, anchor regional trail connections, and protect important natural and scenic resources.

## LEGEND



Figure 3.1. There are six County-owned parks throughout Lancaster County.

Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails, : PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.



LEBANON COUNTY

BERKS COUNTY

**SPEEDWELL FORGE  
COUNTY PARK**

**MONEY ROCKS  
COUNTY PARK**

**CENTRAL PARK**

**BUCHMILLER  
PARK**

**TED PARKER  
NATURAL  
AREA**

CHESTER COUNTY

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER



## Money Rocks County Park

Money Rocks is a large, 391-acre woodland park in the Welsh Mountains of eastern Lancaster County, located directly north of the Welsh Mountains Nature Preserve. Money Rocks is recognized for its rugged rock outcrops and for a more remote, nature-oriented experience anchored by forest trails, woodlands, and distinctive geology. It is a favorite spot for hikers and park users seeking a more rugged terrain.

## Central Park

The County's largest park at 544 acres, Central Park is located on the southern edge of Lancaster City in West Lampeter Township. The park functions as a major regional destination with extensive facilities and a wide range of recreation opportunities. Its size and location make it a key hub for trails and countywide programming, including segments of the Conestoga Trail System. A master plan for Central and Buchmiller Parks was completed in 2008, several concepts of which are incorporated into this plan.

## Buchmiller County Park

A 79 acre park acquired by the County in 1977, Buchmiller Park is located near to Central Park. The park is home to a variety of recreational amenities like pavilions, playgrounds, disc golf courses, and sports courts, making it one of the County parks that supports active use. Together with Central Park, Buchmiller serves a wide range of visitors and residents across the County. As stated above, a master plan for Central and Buchmiller Parks was completed in 2008, several concepts of which are incorporated into this plan.

## Ted Parker Natural Area

Ted Parker is a nature-forward 134-acre county park in southeastern Lancaster County, named for ornithologist Theodore A. Parker III. Its defining characteristic is the Stewart Run stream that divides the park into two distinct areas. The park also includes rocky terrain and waterfalls, and is well suited for activities such as hiking and nature observation.

## Speedwell Forge County Park

Located between the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Speedwell Forge Lake and the wooded State Game Lands of the nearby Furnace Hills, Speedwell Forge spans 412 acres and is mostly undeveloped. Valued for its natural landscape setting, diversity of plant habitats and wildlife, and access within a broader conservation area.

## Chickies Rock County Park

Chickies Rock is 347 acres and is one of the County's oldest regional parks. Located on the Susquehanna River, the park is a scenic and heritage-focused park known for its river overlooks, the prominent Chickies Rock quartzite outcrop, and a landscape shaped by notable geological features and industrial history. Chickies Rock was the subject of a focused master plan in 1989 which outlined specific design and management strategies, several of which have been implemented.

LANCASTER COUNTY OWNS  
**1,907 ACRES** OF PARKLAND  
ACROSS **6 PARKS**



Money Rocks County Park. Source: OLIN



Central Park. Source: Lancaster County



Central Park. Source: OLIN



Ted Parker Natural Area. Source: OLIN



Speedwell Forge County Park. Source: Lancaster County



Chickies Rock County Park. Source: OLIN.

# LEVEL OF SERVICE

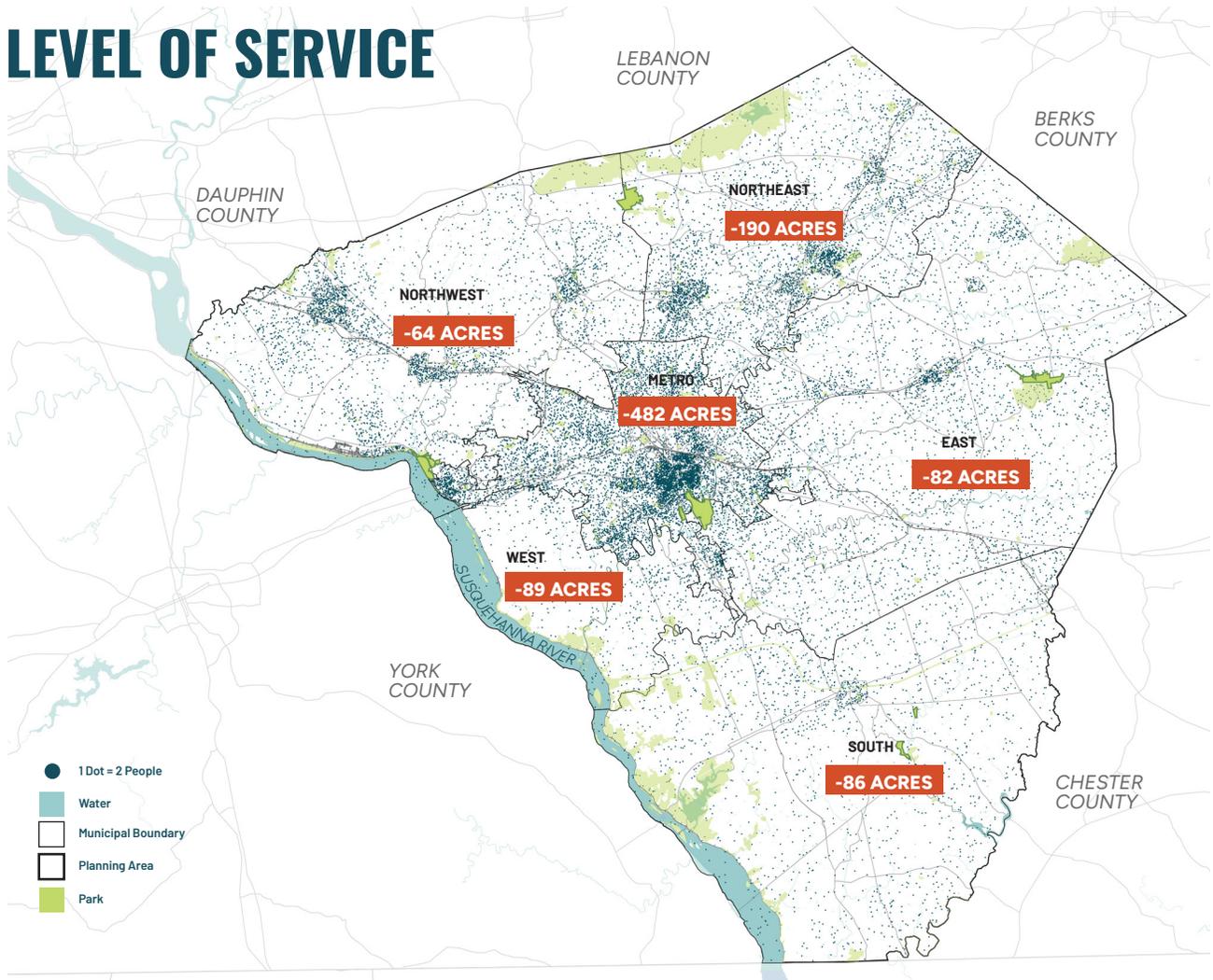


Figure 3.2. Additional acres of County-owned parkland needed by 2040 in each planning area to maintain a level of service of 5 acres per 1,000 residents. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## Planning Areas

The County’s six planning areas – Northeast, Northwest, Metro, West, East, and South – are used to organize park and open space planning and evaluate level of service (LOS). They help compare park supply, access, and needs and identify any service gaps across these subareas. The planning areas were created during the 1992 planning process to help ensure that all Lancaster Countians could reach a park within a 10 mile radius.

While parks and open spaces are present countywide, County-owned parkland is unevenly distributed across the planning areas, with a clear concentration in the Metro area which contains the largest share at about 623 acres.

The Northwest, Northeast, and East areas each have moderate levels of parkland at 426, 333, and 391 acres respectively. In contrast, the South planning area contains a lower amount of County-owned parkland despite having the largest total acres of parks and open space overall. The West area has no County-owned parks, though Chickies Rock is geographically close.

The uneven distribution creates differences in where the County can provide park access and amenities, reinforcing the importance of targeted acquisition and partnerships in areas with low county acreage and where growth is projected to happen.

## Level of Service Targets

In the 1992 Regional Open Space Plan, the County adopted a level-of-service (LOS) goal of 5 acres of County-owned parkland per 1,000 residents in order to meet the needs of the projected 2010 population. This LOS benchmark was intended to evaluate current access and deficits as well as inform priorities for acquisition and expansion. This service guideline aligns with national standards for regional park systems and provides a reasonable benchmark for evaluating parkland supply relative to population.

Maintaining the 5 acre per 1,000 residents standard continues to offer a consistent framework for assessing access, identifying service gaps, and guiding strategic acquisition and investment decisions as the County works to meet both current needs and long-term planning objectives.

Based on this service guideline, every planning area currently shows a deficit in County parkland acreage. The shortfall is most pronounced in the Metro area at about 482 acres, which reflects the County's highest concentration of residents and the pressure that high

LANCASTER COUNTY IS PROJECTED TO  
**ADD 36,882 PEOPLE BY 2040.**  
**993 OF ADDITIONAL PARKLAND  
 ACRES WILL BE NEEDED TO MAINTAIN  
 THE L.O.S. GOAL**

density places on parkland. With a lower population density, the other planning areas see small, but still significant, deficits.

Collectively, these deficits highlight that while County parks serve residents countywide, additional County acreage (or equivalent access through partnerships and easements) is needed to keep pace with population growth and to better balance access across planning areas and the GAs. As the County plans for future park acquisition, population projections are used to determine the amount of park acreage needed to keep pace with population growth.

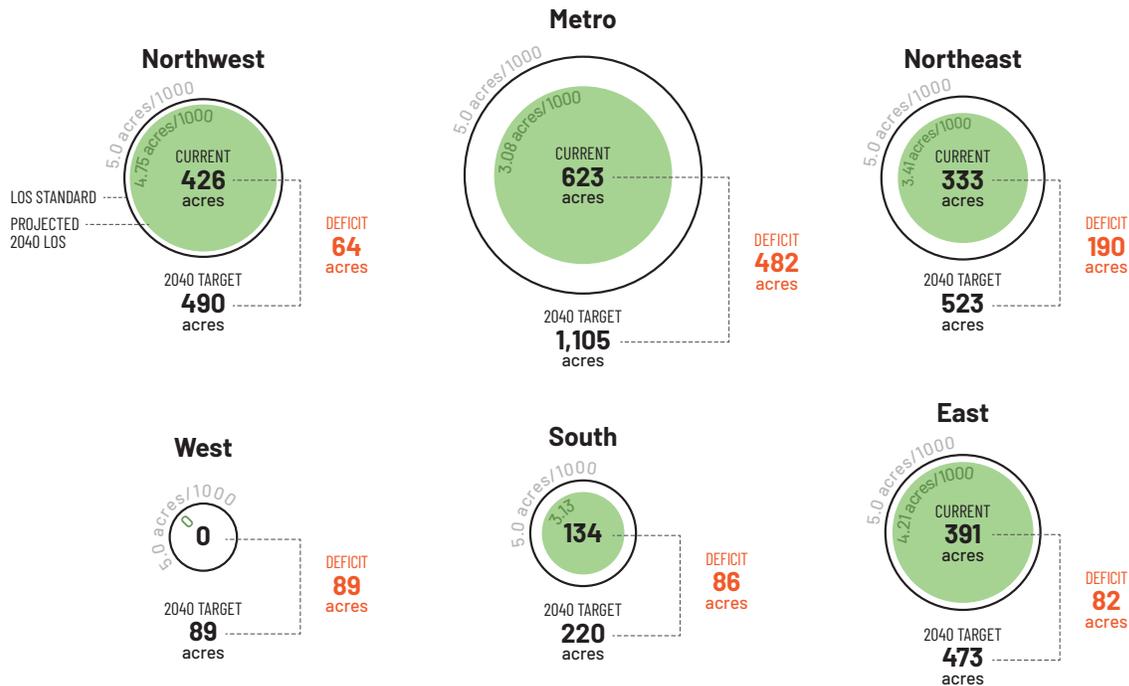
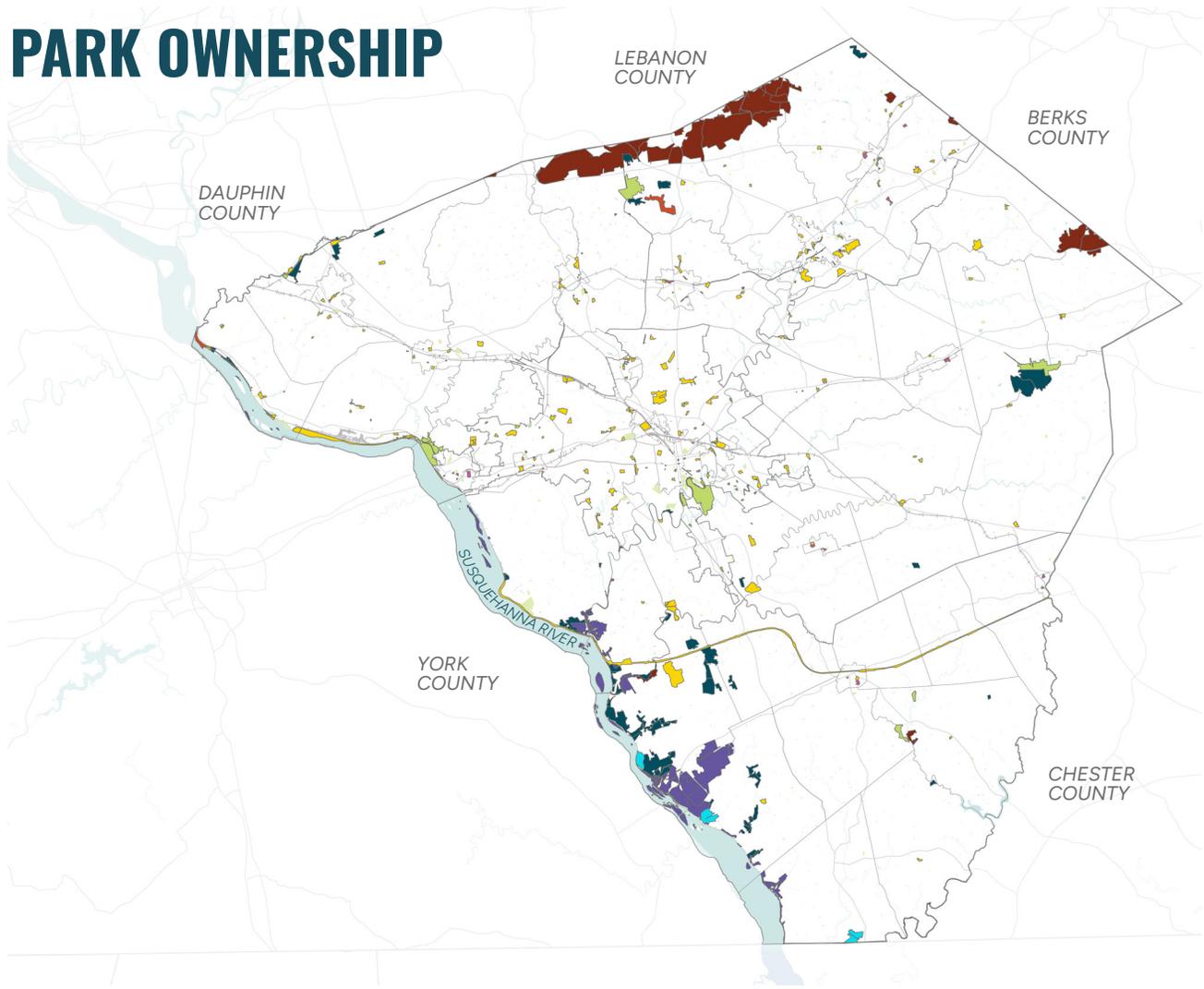


Figure 3.3. Current Acres of county-owned parkland, Target Acres needed in each planning region by 2024, and the resulting Projected Deficit. Source: OLIN.

# PARK OWNERSHIP



## LEGEND

- Lancaster County
- Bureau of State Parks/ Bureau of Forestry
- PA Fish & Boat
- Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)
- Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority
- PA Game Commission
- Lancaster Conservancy
- Local Municipalities
- Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, etc.)

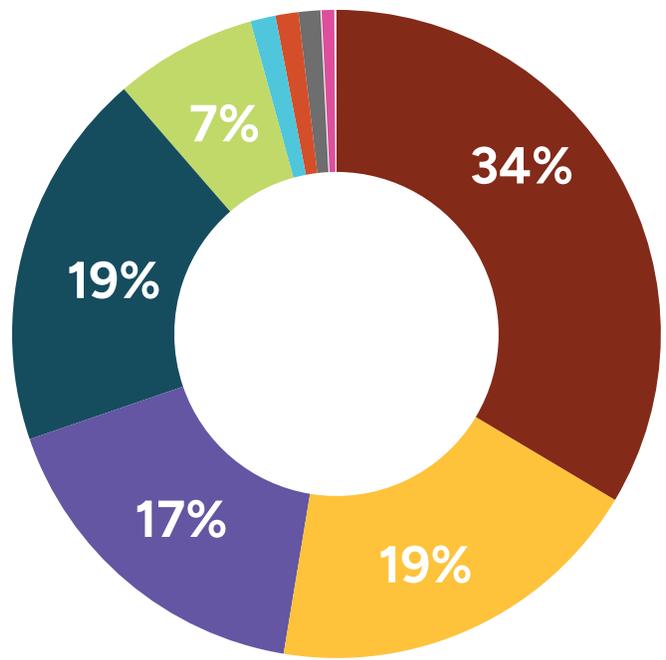


Figure 3.4. Park ownership across Lancaster County. Source: Lancaster County, County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails, : PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

**Table 3.1: Lancaster Parks & Open Space Ownership Summary**

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>%</b>
PA Game Commission	9,766	34%
<b>Local Municipalities</b>	<b>5,703</b>	<b>20%</b>
Lancaster Conservancy	5,323	18%
Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Excelon)	4,986	17%
<b>Lancaster County</b>	<b>1,907</b>	<b>7%</b>
Commonwealth of PA/ Bureau of State Parks	365	1%
PA Bureau of Forestry	174	1%
PA Fish & Boat Commission	331	1%
Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority	328	1%
Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, Associations)	187	1%
PA Bureau of Forestry	174	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,003</b>	

Source: Lancaster County.

The park, trails, and open space network in the county is held by a diverse set of landowners ranging from public to state and nonprofits. The County currently owns and manages only about 7% of all open space, whereas the Pennsylvania Game Commission owns the largest share of open space at 34%. Many of the game lands are located in the Northeast/Northwest areas of the County, with some game lands located adjacent or near to County parks like State Game Lands 156 bordering Speedwell Forge.

Local municipalities hold the next largest share at 20%, followed closely by the Lancaster Conservancy at 18%. Similarly to the game lands, the Conservancy's open spaces like the High Family Nature Reserve (formerly known as the Donegal Highlands) and Welsh Mountain Nature Reserve abut County-owned parkland, effectively expanding parkland acreage for the user as an interconnected system of publicly accessible open spaces, even when ownership and management differ. Utilities also account for a significant portion of landownership, while other entities like the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission and various nonprofits hold much smaller amounts of land.

As the County looks to manage and expand their parkland acreage over the next years, this current



Kelly's Run Nature Preserve. Source: Lancaster Conservancy.

ownership distribution underscores that expanding access and protecting open space depends not only on County acquisition, but also on sustained coordination and partnerships among municipal, nonprofit, state, and other landowners.

# EXISTING TRAIL SYSTEM

**Lancaster County's trail system is a diverse network of land and water trails that together support recreation, transportation, tourism, and environmental stewardship.**

The County's trail system includes a network of land trails, ranging from neighborhood paths to longer regional greenways, and a two water trails that provide paddling routes and access points on major waterways.

Land trails are anchored by several major corridors that connect parks, municipalities, and destinations. There are efforts focused on closing gaps and expanding connections to transit, urban areas, and adjacent counties. Water trails, associated with the County's beloved Susquehanna and Conestoga Rivers, add a complementary recreational network that supports paddling, fishing, and other water-based recreation while strengthening connections between communities and waterfront access points.

Together, the land and water trail systems function as countywide recreation infrastructure. They enhance access to natural areas and parks, support health and recreational activities, and create opportunities for economic development. They also require coordinated management and continued investment in access and maintenance, as highlighted in Chapter 5.

## LEGEND

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Parks/Open Space   | <b>EXISTING TRAILS</b>  |
|  Growth Area        |  Trail       |
|  Water              |  Water Trail |
|  Municipal Boundary |   |
|  Major Road         |   |

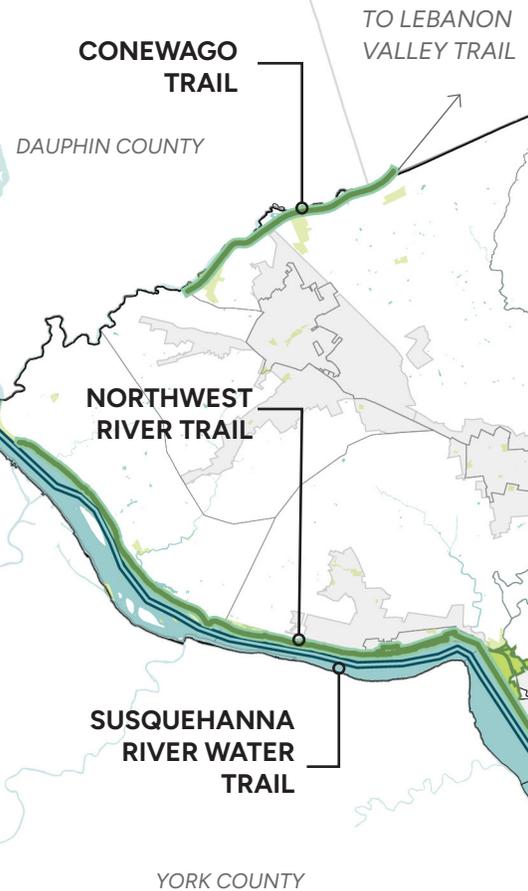
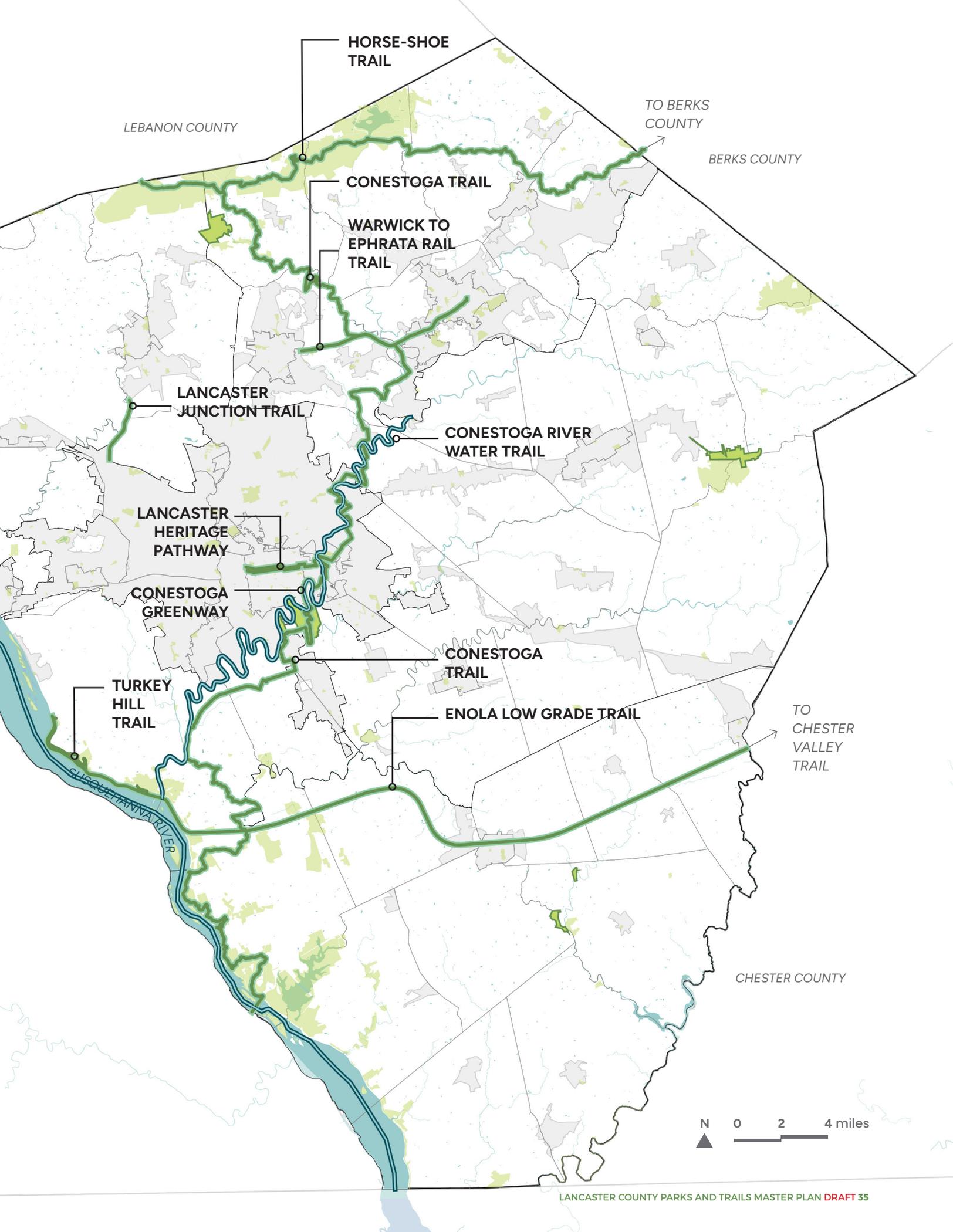


Figure 3.5. Land and water trails across Lancaster County.

Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails, PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.



LEBANON COUNTY

HORSE-SHOE TRAIL

TO BERKS COUNTY

BERKS COUNTY

CONESTOGA TRAIL

WARWICK TO EPHRATA RAIL TRAIL

LANCASTER JUNCTION TRAIL

CONESTOGA RIVER WATER TRAIL

LANCASTER HERITAGE PATHWAY

CONESTOGA GREENWAY

CONESTOGA TRAIL

TURKEY HILL TRAIL

ENOLA LOW GRADE TRAIL

TO CHESTER VALLEY TRAIL

CHESTER COUNTY



## Northwest River Trail (NWRT)

The Northwest River Trail (NWRT) is a 14.25-mile multi-municipal riverfront corridor along the Susquehanna River. It acts as both a recreation destination and transportation spine, linking communities, trailheads, and recreational assets along the river. The trail runs through Chickies Rock County Park and various scenic and heritage sites.

## Conestoga Trail

The Conestoga Trail is a 65-mile regional hiking corridor that traverses Lancaster County from State Game Lands 156 in the Furnace Hills in the north to the Norman Wood Bridge along the Susquehanna River in the south. Maintained by the Lancaster Hiking Club, the trail is marked with orange blazes and offers a diverse experience, combining rural roads, farm lanes, and natural segments through wooded valleys and steep river bluffs. The trail is open year-round for hiking and serves as an important recreational resource, providing opportunities for outdoor activity while preserving access to the county's unique natural and cultural heritage.

## Conestoga Greenway

The Conestoga Greenway is a 1-mile prototypical greenway connecting natural areas and parks along the Conestoga River. The trail is born out of the 1999 Conestoga Greenway Plan, which was developed by the Lancaster Inter-Municipal Committee (LIMC), a Council of Government (COG), in central Lancaster County. Future projects like the Sunnyside Environmental Center will link to the greenway, enhancing the existing trail.

## Conewago Recreation Trail

A 5.5-mile rail trail, the Conewago Recreation Trail provides a relatively flat, multi-use route that connects to the Lebanon Valley Rail Trail. It follows the Conewago Creek through various landscapes including woodlands and agricultural lands.

## Lancaster Junction Recreation Trail

A shorter, 2.3-mile trail segment, the Lancaster Junction Recreation Trail was a former rail line and now helps support neighborhood access and connectivity to larger trail networks. It has well graded surfaces and is suitable for multiple uses.

## Enola Low Grade Trail\*

The Enola Low Grade Trail is a 29-mile rail trail that runs between the Susquehanna River and the border with Chester County. A significant feature of the trail is the 150-foot high, 1,560-foot long Safe Harbor Trestle Bridge, which offers scenic views of the Susquehanna River above and below the Safe Harbor Dam.

## Warwick-Ephrata Rail Trail (WERT)\*

Bookended by Ephrata and Lititz, the Warwick-Ephrata Rail Trail (WERT) is a 7.5-mile trail segment that runs through multiple municipalities. It features mild grades, making it popular among walkers, runners, cyclists, and other trail users.

## Horse-Shoe Trail\*

The Horse-Shoe Trail is a 140-mile long hiking and equestrian trail in southeastern Pennsylvania that runs through various counties, including Lancaster County and its neighbors of Chester, Berks, Lebanon, and Dauphin counties. It is managed by the Horse-Shoe Trail Club. Approximately 25 miles of the trail are located in Lancaster County.

## Susquehanna River Water Trail\*

The Susquehanna River Water Trail provides a long-distance (53 miles) paddling corridor that runs along the County's western edge. It links river townships, parks, and riverfront access points to a larger, statewide trail network. There are many access points along the water trail and is a significant blueway that anchors the County's outdoor recreation identity. As a major river, the Susquehanna is connected to the nationally recognized Chesapeake Gateways Network.

## Conestoga River Water Trail\*

The 32-mile Conestoga River Water Trail is the County's primary inland water trail, following the 60-mile Conestoga River as it flows into the Susquehanna. It is a popular destination for kayakers and canoers. The trail is managed by the Conestoga River Club. In 2026, the Conestoga was named Pennsylvania State's River of the Year, and is also connected to nationally significant waterways as a Chesapeake Gateways Network Water Trail.

*\* Trails not managed by the County.*



Enola Low Grade Trail. Source: OLIN.



Horse-Shoe Trail. Source: Lancaster County.



Conestoga Trail. Source: Lancaster County.



Conewago Recreation Trail. Source: OLIN.



Conestoga River Water Trail. Source: Conestoga River Club.



Northwest River Trail. Source: SNHA (Credit: Brian Donnelly).

# TRAIL GAPS

**While the County’s trail system is anchored by several important corridors, key gaps limit the overall network’s connectivity and continuity.**

These gaps in the network can make it difficult to reach parks, urban areas, trailheads, and other access points for users. They also often occur across various municipal boundaries, presenting challenges around acquisition, management, and maintenance of different segments along the same trail.

Gaps shown in red in Figure 3.5 highlight the priorities for the County to address in the near future. Targeted connections can link major connections, like the Conestoga Greenway to Lancaster City and the Conewago Recreation Trail to the Susquehanna River corridor and the Northwest River Trail. Chapter 6: Focus Areas addresses these priority gaps.

Closing these priority gaps can transform currently distinct trail sections into a cohesive countywide system, thereby expanding access to residents and visitors, improving connection to urban centers and parks throughout the county, and creating longer, continuous routes that support both recreation and transportation.

DAUPHIN COUNTY

**CONEWAGO -  
NORTHWEST RIVER  
TRAIL GAP**

YORK COUNTY

## LEGEND

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Parks/Open Space   | <b>EXISTING TRAILS</b>   |
|  Growth Area        |  Trail                            |
|  Water              |  Water Trail                      |
|  Municipal Boundary | <b>PROPOSED TRAILS</b>   |
|  Major Road         |  Proposed Trail (Preferred)       |
|  |  Proposed Trail (Alternate Route) |

Figure 3.6. Trail Gaps  
Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails, PASDA; Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

LEBANON COUNTY

BERKS COUNTY

WERT TRAIL  
EXTENSION

LANCASTER  
HERITAGE  
PATHWAY

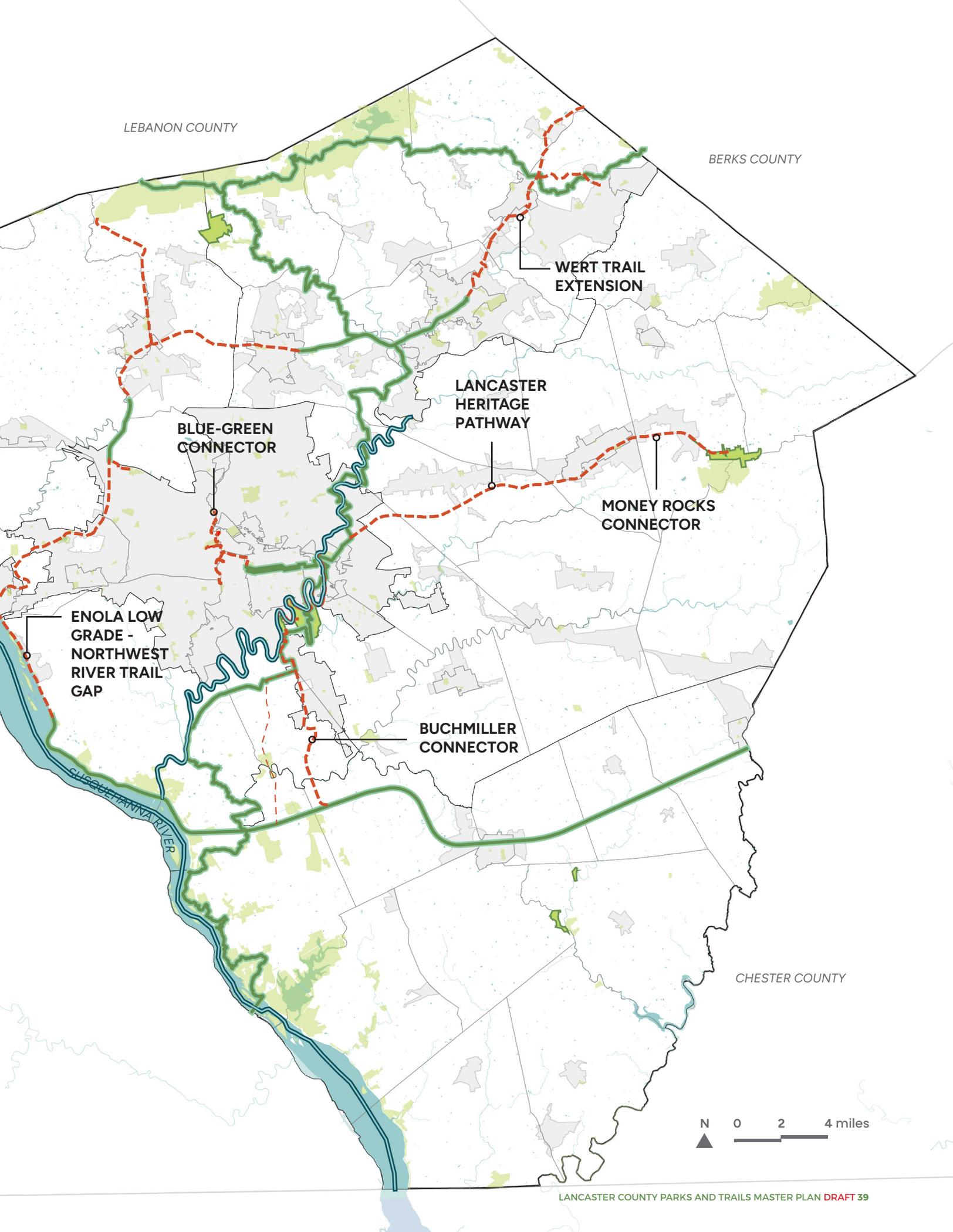
BLUE-GREEN  
CONNECTOR

MONEY ROCKS  
CONNECTOR

ENOLA LOW  
GRADE -  
NORTHWEST  
RIVER TRAIL  
GAP

BUCHMILLER  
CONNECTOR

CHESTER COUNTY



# FARMLAND PRESERVATION

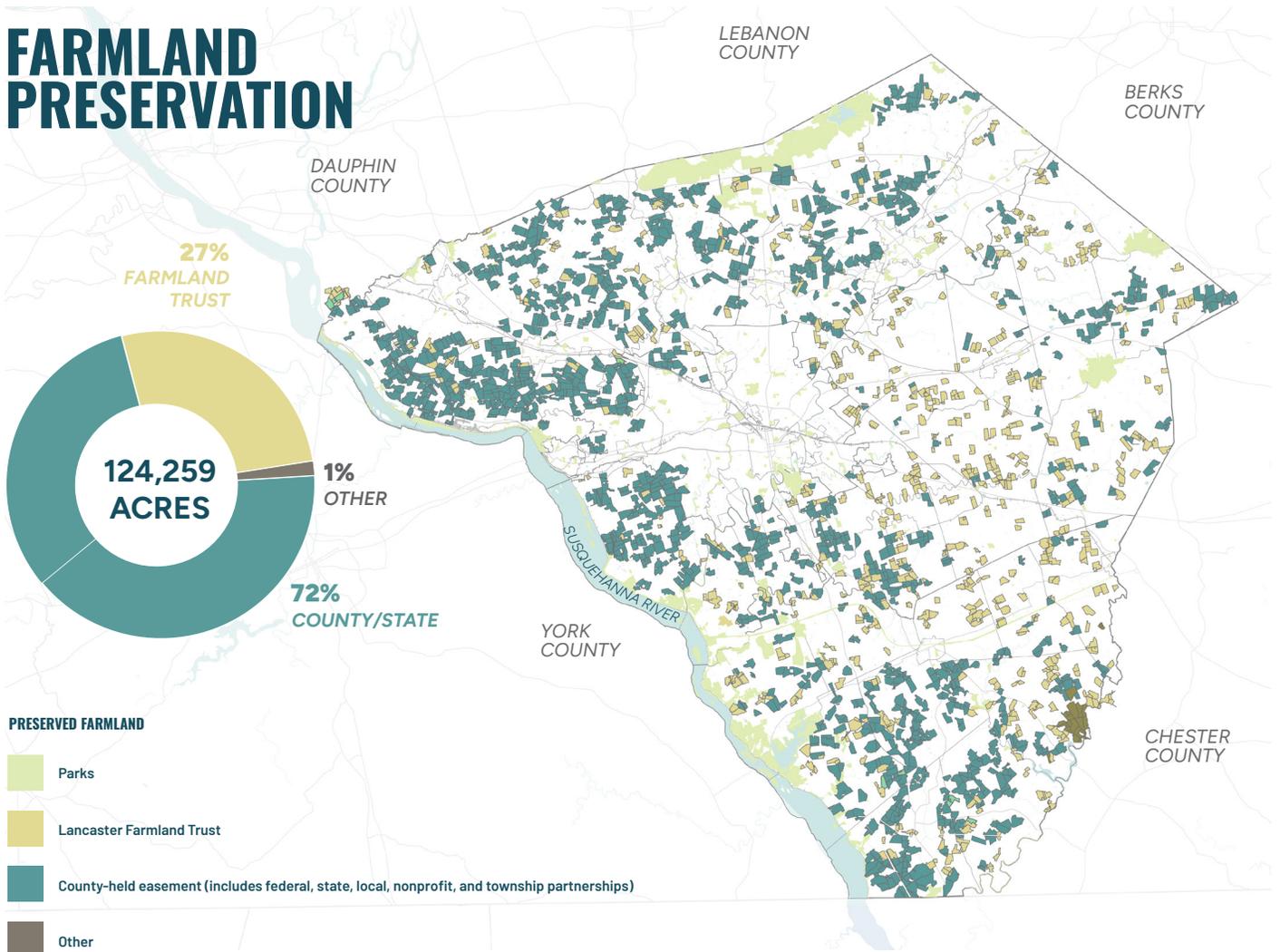


Figure 3.7. Preserved farmland across Lancaster County is concentrated outside of the Metro area. Source: Lancaster County, County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails, PASDA; Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Preserved Farmland

Agriculture remains a defining land use in Lancaster County, with roughly 327,000 acres of extensive working farmland across much of the county outside the most developed and urbanized areas.

Protected agricultural lands are distributed broadly and in dense clusters across multiple townships, reflecting the county’s rural character. More than 70% of the easements on preserved farmlands are held by the County and/or Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, especially in the West, South, and Northwest areas. The nonprofit land trust, the Lancaster Farmland Trust, holds about a quarter of all farmland easements, which are primarily in the eastern and southern parts of the county.

These protected farmlands help stabilize large, contiguous areas of open land and preserve the scenic and cultural landscapes that define many road, trail, and waterway experiences. However, this can also constrain parkland and trail acquisition.

There is limited availability of unencumbered parcels, which increases competition for non-protected sites, and requires more strategic tools such as easements, shared-use agreements, and targeted acquisitions to expand public access while respecting working agricultural landscapes.

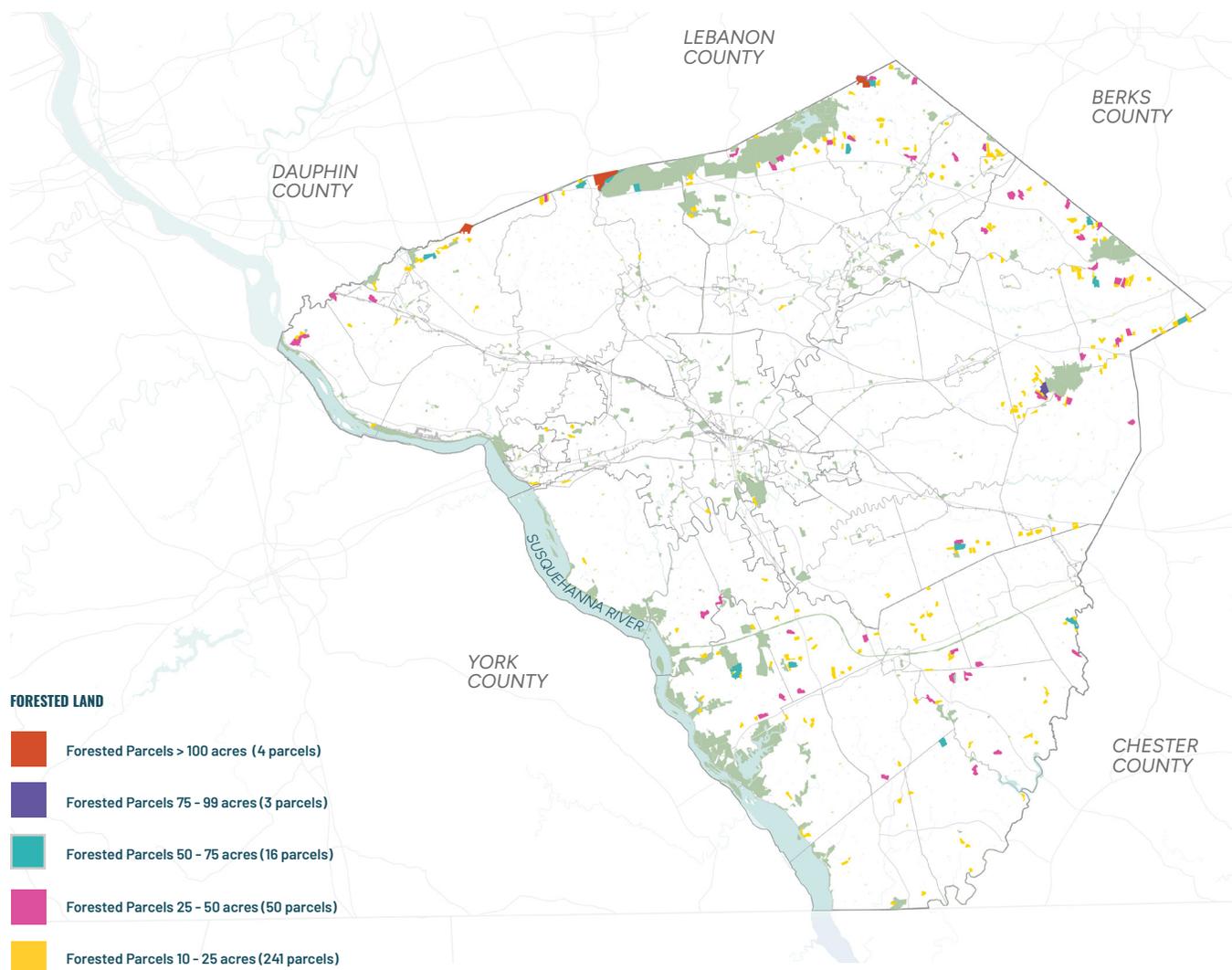


Figure 3.8. Forested land in the County is limited and located mostly in the outskirts. Source: Lancaster County, County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails, PASDA; Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Forested Land

When considering additional land for acquisition, ideally parks and open space owners, such as the County, seek large parcels of land that are accessible, contain groves of trees and other appealing natural elements that would be suitable for a regional park.

Unfortunately, available forested land is limited and unevenly distributed across the county, with most larger wooded areas concentrated along major river corridors and steeper, less developable landscapes. Much of the county’s remaining tree cover occurs in smaller, disconnected patches rather than extensive, connected forest blocks.

This fragmentation reduces habitat connectivity and limits the ecological services forests and wooded areas can provide, such as water filtration, flood mitigation, and temperature moderation. Over time, continued parcelization and incremental land conversion can further break up remaining woodlands, making protection and corridor-based connections (especially along waterways and trails) critical to restoring a more functional and resilient natural resource network.

# NATURAL RESOURCES

Lancaster County contains a diverse range of ecological resources shaped by its fertile soils, agricultural heritage, and network of waterways. The county supports extensive farmland that provides important habitat for grassland birds and pollinators, while its forested areas, including riparian woodlands along streams and rivers, help filter pollutants, stabilize stream banks, and support wildlife such as migratory birds, amphibians, and small mammals. The Susquehanna River and its tributaries, including the Conestoga River and Pequea Creek, are key aquatic resources that sustain fish populations, wetlands, and floodplain habitats. Wetlands, floodplains, and headwater streams throughout the county play critical roles in improving water quality, storing floodwaters, and supporting plant and animal biodiversity. Together, these interconnected natural systems contribute to regional water quality, wildlife habitat, and overall ecosystem resilience.

Agriculture is the largest land use category in the county, accounting for approximately 40 percent of the total land area. The County maintains a substantial farmland preservation program, with an estimated 124,000 acres protected through conservation easements, representing approximately 33 percent of agriculturally zoned land. Conservation lands, defined as areas preserved for open space and natural resource protection (non-agricultural land), account for approximately five percent of the County's land area. These lands are publicly owned or managed by nonprofit organizations, utility companies, semi-public agencies, and others.

Lancaster County contains approximately 1,430 miles of streams. While more than 90 percent of these streams are classified as impaired due to poor water quality, they continue to provide important habitat and resource benefits to surrounding communities. Forested riparian buffers, which occur along many of the County's waterways, help reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff before it enters streams. Expanding and enhancing these buffers would further improve water quality and provide additional habitat for aquatic insects and other wildlife.

Lancaster County contains several unique and regionally significant ecological resources due to its location along the Susquehanna River, diverse geology, and mix of agricultural and natural landscapes. Some of the most notable include:



Susquehanna River Corridor. Source: Lancaster County.

## Susquehanna River Corridor and River Hills

The Susquehanna River forms Lancaster County's western boundary and supports extensive floodplain forests, rocky outcrops, and islands that provide habitat for migratory birds, raptors, and freshwater mussels. The hills along the corridor contain large blocks of intact forest that support interior forest birds and serve as important wildlife movement corridors.

## Serpentine Barrens

These globally rare habitats occur on unique serpentine soils that are low in nutrients and high in heavy metals. The harsh soil conditions support specialized plant communities, including rare grasses, wildflowers, and insect species that are uncommon or absent in surrounding landscapes. These barrens are considered some of the most ecologically distinctive habitats in Pennsylvania. The PA Bureau of Forestry manages the Rock Springs Nature Preserve, a 174 acre preserve in Fulton Township that is part of the state-designated Susquehanna Riverlands Conservation Landscape. Rock Springs, along with the State Line Serpentine Barrens, represents some of the last remaining serpentine grasslands in the eastern United States.

## Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area spans nearly 6,000 acres in northern Lancaster County's Furnace Hills and is managed by the Pennsylvania Game Commission to support waterfowl, grassland-nesting birds, and wetland-dependent species. It contains a wide diversity of habitat types and harbors six sensitive species of concern. Middle Creek is recognized as one of only six Globally Important Bird Areas in Pennsylvania.

## NATURAL RESOURCE ANALYSIS

The natural resources analysis included compiling publicly available resources and GIS layers to highlight underlying ecological, land-use, and environmental factors across Lancaster County. The two sources that illustrated ecological richness to inform prioritization for trail and land acquisition were the Climate Connectivity and Core Habitat layers, both of which originated from the Pennsylvania National Heritage Program (PNHP).

- Climate Connectivity depicts a regional connectivity analysis that highlights connected and resilient high biodiversity value areas. The connectivity priority highlighted in this dataset reflects regional flow, biodiversity value, resiliency, geophysical setting, and landscape condition.
- Core Habitat focuses on areas that are the best examples of ecological resources in a county. Although agricultural lands and open space were included as part of inventory areas, the emphasis for the designation and delineation of the areas are the ecological values present. Important selection criteria are the existence of habitat for plants and animals of special concern, the existence of uncommon or especially important natural communities, and the size and landscape context of a site containing good quality natural features.

From this analysis, eleven focus areas were identified that corresponded to elevated ecological importance.



Middle Creek Management Area. Source: Creative Commons (Credit: Concord, CC BY-SA 4.0)

# NATURAL RESOURCE ANALYSIS

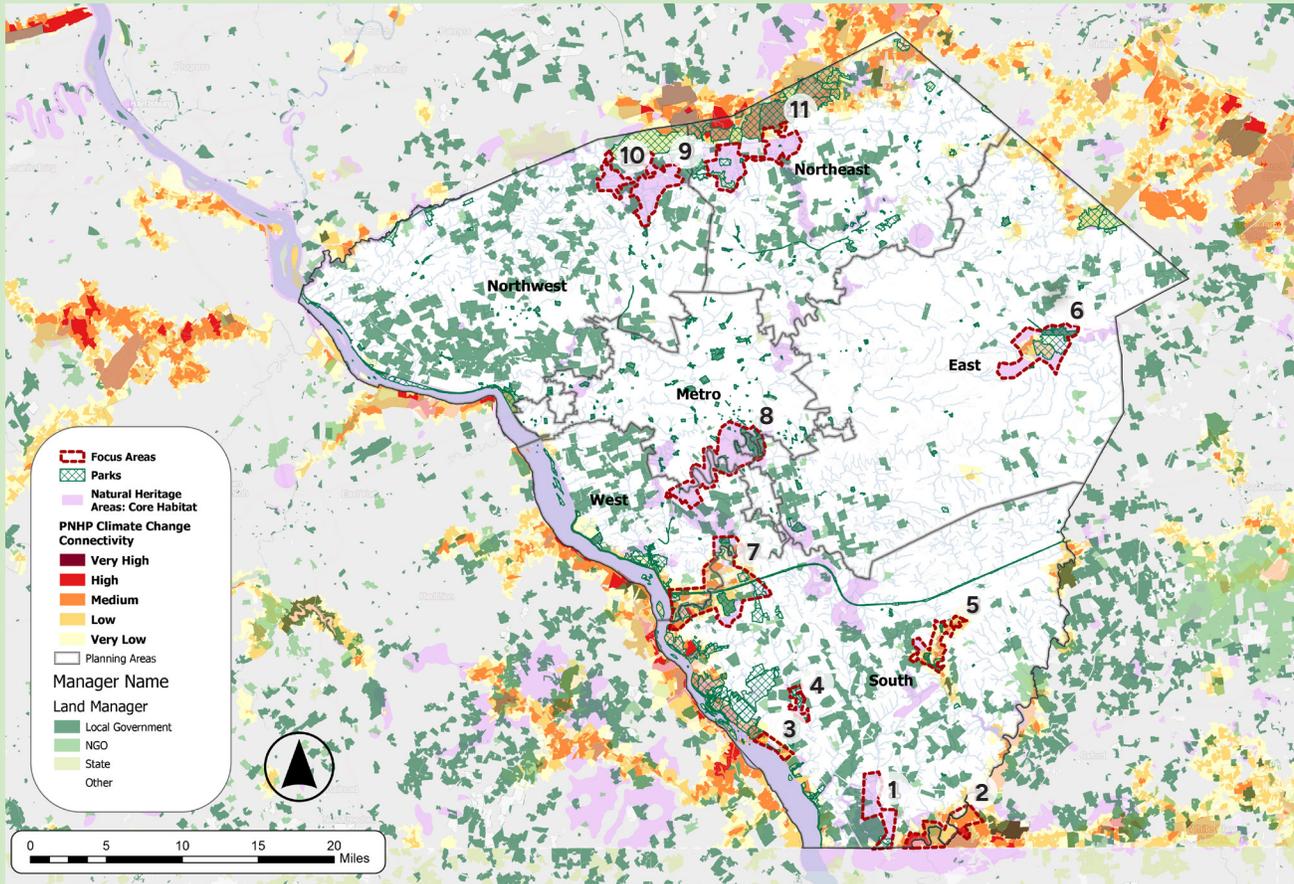


Figure 3.9: Natural Resources. Source: Biohabitats.

## South

### » Focus Area 1

This area, combined for an estimated 1,748 acres, is adjacent to Rock Springs Nature Preserve (RSNP), which contains the globally-rare serpentine barrens ecosystem. Focus Area 1 would include two miles upstream of Conowingo Creek from RSNP and portions of the watershed that could be enhanced to benefit local water quality. Additionally, the entirety of Focus Area 1 was identified as Core Habitat.

### » Focus Area 2

Close in proximity to Focus Area 1, Focus Area 2 was shown to have elevated patches (high and medium) of Climate Change Connectivity. The

area is estimated at 2,371-acres and encompasses seven miles of the meandering Octoraro Creek riparian corridor, and like Focus Area 1, is identified entirely as Core Habitat and encompasses seven miles of the meandering Octoraro Creek riparian corridor.

### » Focus Area 3

Located adjacent to the Susquehanna River, Focus Area 3 is estimated at 609-acres and includes a portion of existing park land. This area has both Core Habitat and elevated levels of Climate Change Connectivity (low and medium).

» **Focus Area 4**

Focus Area 4 is approximately 568-acres and encompasses the 90-acre Willis & Elsie Shenk Nature Preserve. Much of Focus Area 4 is considered Core Habitat and would expand the riparian buffer around Fishing Creek.

» **Focus Area 5**

This area was highlighted for combining two large areas of Core Habitat, which makes about approximately 50% of the total 1,665-acre area. The Core Habitat patches include currently designated State Game Lands, which are also designated as Climate Change Connectivity areas (low and medium). This area includes the Ted Parker Natural Area, one of the key opportunity areas identified within this plan.

## East

» **Focus Area 6**

Focus Area 6 is designated as Core Habitat in its entirety (3,562-acres). This area includes the Welsh Mountain and Money Rocks Parks and has Climate Change Connectivity patches (low and medium). Money Rocks County Park is one of the key opportunity areas identified within this plan.

## South & West

» **Focus Area 7**

This area is identified as containing approximately 60% Core Habitat of the total 7,055-acres. It has a portion of the area adjacent to the Susquehanna River corridor, includes the Pequea Creek corridor, and several Climate Change Connectivity patches (low to high). Existing parks can be found in this area, including State Game Lands, Fox Hollow, Shenks Ferry, and the Enola Low Grade Trail.

## Metro

» **Focus Area 8**

Focus Area 8 is designated as Core Habitat in its entirety (4,963-acres) and contains a portion of the meandering Conestoga River corridor. Several parks exist in its area, including Lancaster County Central Park, Buchmiller Park, and the Sunnyside Nature Preserve. This focus area encompasses Buchmiller Park and the Conestoga Greenway. These areas are identified within this plan as key opportunities for a park and trail expansion, respectively.

## Northwest

» **Focus Area 9**

This area is largely Core Habitat (approximately 2,647-acres) and adjacent to the north are State Game Lands.

» **Focus Area 10**

This area is largely Core Habitat (approximately 1,007-acres) and adjacent to the north are State Game Lands.

» **Focus Area 11**

Focus Area 11 is designated as Core Habitat in its entirety (3,623-acres) and contains the Speedwell Forge County Park. Immediately north, State Game Lands can be found, which also boast extremely high Climate Change Connectivity scores (medium to very high) and large patches of Core Habitat. Speedwell Forge County Park is one of the key opportunity areas identified within this plan.



Conoy Wetlands Nature Preserve is run by the Lancaster County Conservancy. Source: Lancaster County.

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

### Lancaster Conservancy

Founded in 1969 to preserve and maintain natural lands for plant and wildlife habitat, recreation activities including hiking, hunting, fishing and to protect water quality in the county's streams. The Conservancy has grown substantially over the past 20 years, and now has a staff of 26 as well as several seasonal staff and volunteers.

The Conservancy has preserved more than 10,000 acres in Lancaster and York counties. It currently manages more than 8,000 acres that encompass its 50 nature preserves and 45 miles of trails. The Conservancy also holds more than 70 conservation easements on private land. It plays a leading role among non-profit organizations in Lancaster County in providing outdoor nature experiences for people of all ages.

The Conservancy's nature preserves and Climber's Run nature center act like passive parks with trails. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conservancy's preserves saw heavy use, and several of the preserves remain very popular with hikers, children, and visitors in general. The Conservancy actively manages its preserves for public access and ecological health.

### Relationship with Lancaster County Government

» The County has provided matching grant money to the Conservancy for land preservation projects, but it is not regular or consistent. Ideally, the County could have an annual matching funds arrangement with the Conservancy.

» The Conservancy has a property rating system, LYNAS, to guide its work of strategically acquiring properties to add to its existing nature preserves or creating new preserves.

» While the Conservancy preserves land throughout Lancaster County, much of its focus is on the forested "river hills" along the Susquehanna River in York and Lancaster counties. These lands are within the state-designated Susquehanna Riverlands Conservation Landscape (SRCL). As the Exterior Lead of the SRCL, the Conservancy receives financial support for administration and land acquisitions from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Funding provided by Lancaster County to the Conservancy for land acquisitions is typically matched by DCNR, which helps to reduce the burden of private fundraising for large, expensive land acquisitions.

## Funding Models

- » The Conservancy has been very successful in acquiring grants from the Pennsylvania and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) focuses on land preservation projects.
- » The Conservancy holds more than 70 conservation easements on private land, some purchased and some donated. The Conservancy has received donations of land, but such donations are rather rare.
- » The Conservancy has a strong track record of fundraising from Lancaster County Individuals and businesses, and more recently from York County sources, as well.
- » The Conservancy often pays the appraised fair market value for a property.

## Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Founded in 1866, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is an independent Commonwealth commission composed of 10 Commissioners appointed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature. The mission of the Commission is: to protect, conserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and to provide fishing and boating opportunities.

The Commission is supported by the Fish Fund and the Boat Fund. The Fish Fund depends on sales of fishing licenses and fees (about 66%) and federal funds (about 22%) from taxes on fishing-related items. The Boat Fund receives boat registration/titling fees, refunds of liquid fuels taxes on gas used by motorboats, and federal aid.

The Fish and Boat Commission benefits from donations to the Conservation Acquisition Partnership Program from people interested in maintaining and enhancing access to Pennsylvania's waters.

The Fish and Boat Commission manages 106-acre Speedwell Forge Lake for public fishing and boating, and their Southeast Region office is located there. The Fish and Boat Commission has awarded grant funding for stream restoration projects in Lancaster County, such as Donegal Creek, a cold water trout stream.

## Relationship with Lancaster County Government

- » The Fish and Boat Commission emphasizes local partnerships, including with local communities, sportsmen's clubs, local watershed associations, civic organizations, and volunteers. These partners participate in adopt-an-access programs, stock fish, and raise funds to provide additional maintenance and amenities above and beyond the PFBC's ability.
- » Lancaster County is located in the Commission's sixth district.
- » Lancaster County operates a 412-acre county park at Speedwell Forge. The park is located between the Fish and Boat Commission's Speedwell Lake and State Game Lands No. 156 in the Furnace Hills. The county park is undeveloped with woods and hiking trails, and a portion of Hammer Creek. Hunting and fishing are allowed in the park during the permitted seasons.

## Funding Models

- » The Fish and Boat Commission administers an extensive grants program aimed at enhancing fishing, boating and aquatic resource conservation. The program aims to develop and support partnerships to ensure robust opportunities on and around Pennsylvania's waterways.
- » Boating Facility Grant: Provides grants for the planning, acquisition, development, expansion and rehabilitation of public boating facilities.
- » Coldwater Heritage Partnership: Provides leadership, coordination, technical assistance, and funding support for the evaluation, conservation and protection of Pennsylvania's cold-water streams.
- » York and Lancaster Counties Habitat Improvement Grant: Funds for this program are used to support projects that benefit habitat improvement and sediment reduction projects in these counties.



Susquehanna Riverlands celebration. Source: Lancaster County.

## Pennsylvania Game Commission

The Pennsylvania Game Commission was created in 1895. The mission of the Commission is “To manage and protect wildlife and their habitats while promoting hunting and trapping for current and future generations.”

The Commission is funded mainly by the sale of hunting and fur-taker licenses; the sale of timber from State Game Lands, mineral, oil, and gas leasing revenues; and a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition.

The Commission owns and manages more than 1.5 million acres of State Game lands across the Commonwealth. The Commission has 700 full-time employees and thousands of part-time staff and volunteers. In 2024 alone, the Game Commission acquired 5,300 acres of Game Lands, and their 2024-2025 Annual Report listed 7,406 acres of land added to their ownership. As the Game Commission is actively conserving additional acreage for the State Game Lands system, future conservation could occur in Lancaster County.

## Relationship with Lancaster County Government

» There are 9,766 acres of State Game Lands in Lancaster County, spread across six areas, mainly in the Furnace Hills, a largely wooded area in the north central part of the county. The State Game Lands are available for hunting in season.

» Some State Game Lands are near the County’s Speedwell Forge Park. The Game Commission is building a new conservation museum in State Game Lands 46, near to the County’s Speedwell Forge Park.

» The Conservation Heritage Museum will be an addition to the Visitors Center at Middle Creek, where, annually, more than 100,000 snow geese pass through between the months of January and March.

## Funding Models

» The Commission continues to add to State Game Lands through fee simple purchases and donations. For example, in September of 2024, the Commission approved nine purchases and two donations.



## Pennsylvania State Parks

The Bureau of State Parks is an agency within the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The first state park was established at Valley Forge in 1893. Today, the Bureau of State Parks manages 124 state parks with more than 300,000 acres for outdoor recreation activities and overnight stays. Pennsylvania state parks do not charge an entrance fee.

Susquehannock and Pinnacle Overlook are the only state parks in Lancaster County. Susquehannock State Park covers 224 acres on a wooded plateau overlooking the Susquehanna River in Drumore Township in southern Lancaster County. Pinnacle Overlook is 140-acres in size and features one of the most popular scenic overlooks of the lower Susquehanna River valley in the region. While these two state parks are smaller than many state parks throughout the Pennsylvania, they offer easily

accessible vistas to the Susquehanna River to visitors of all ages and abilities. Susquehannock State Park offers spectacular views as well as a variety of activities, including hiking, horseback riding, overnight stays, picnicking, and wildlife watching.

### Relationship with Lancaster County Government

» Currently, there are no known proposals for additional state parks in Lancaster County.

### Funding Models

» The County could partner with State Parks to purchase land for a new state park or add to existing state parks.

» One of the newest state parks is the Susquehanna Riverlands State Park in York County opposite Lancaster County, created in 2022. The Bureau of State Parks partnered with the Lancaster Conservancy in the park acquisition.



Lancaster County Trail Community Run. Source: Lancaster County.

## BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking is used to help parks and recreation departments and the communities they serve make better decisions on what facilities and programs are needed and aligned with similarly-sized and geographically-similar communities.

The planning process applies benchmarking by using the below metrics in order to compare Lancaster County's level-of-service to peer communities:

- » Jurisdiction population size
- » Jurisdiction land area size
- » Total acreage of parks in the system
- » Number of parks in the system
- » Miles of trails in the system
- » Parks and recreation funding

The analysis relied on 2020 metrics in order to be consistent across data sources.

### Total Park Acres

The benchmarking process compared Lancaster County to comparable Pennsylvania counties to determine how it stacks up in terms of park acres per resident. The analysis relied on National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) data, using 25th, Median, and 75th percentiles.

While the analysis showed that Lancaster County had a lower parks per resident ratio than some nearby counties, it is about average overall, as shown in Table 3.2.

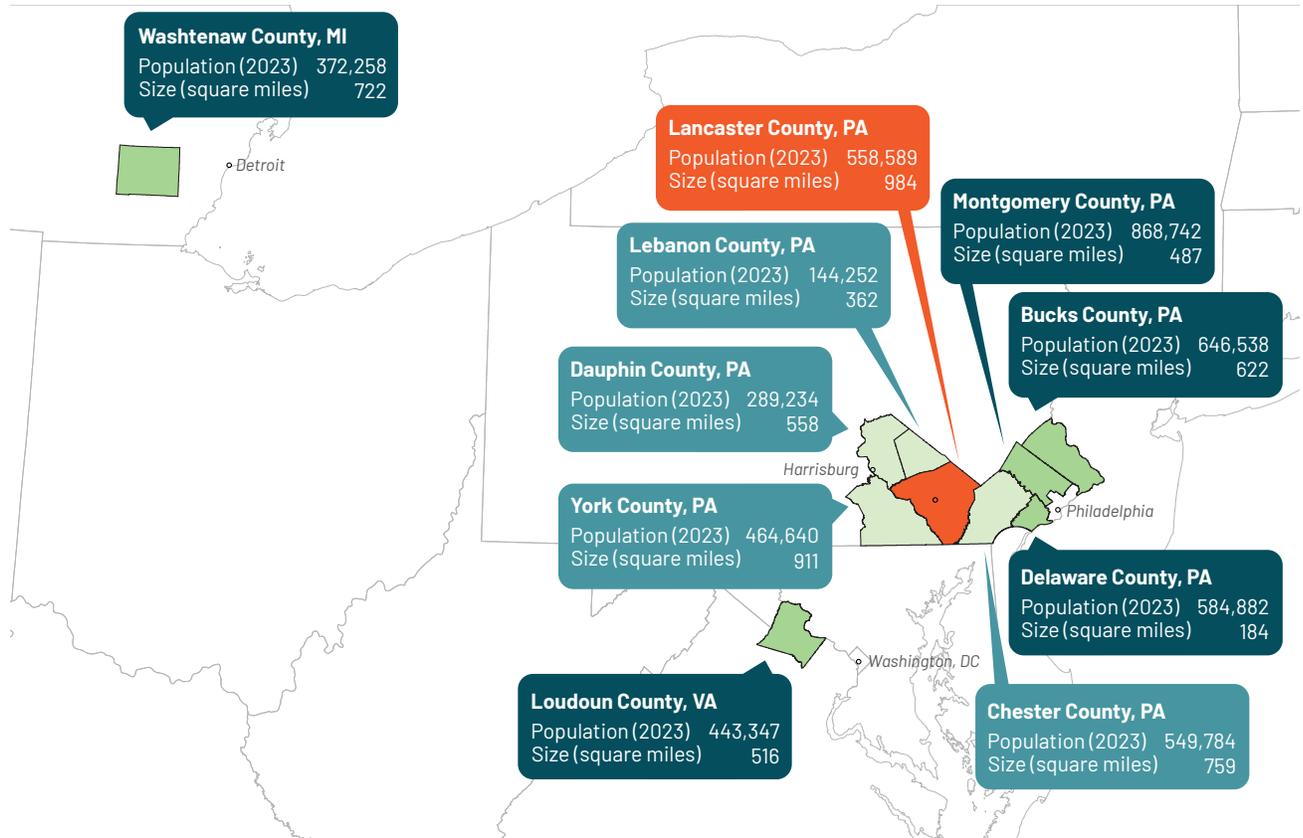


Figure 3.10: Benchmarking comparison counties. Source: NRPA.

METRIC	25TH	MEDIAN	75TH	LANCASTER COUNTY	CHESTER COUNTY	YORK COUNTY	BUCKS COUNTY	DAUPHIN COUNTY	LEBANON COUNTY
Number of parks				6	7	7	9	8	1
Total Number of Park Acres				1,907	3,577	714	155	971	1,105
Acre of Parks per 1,000 Residents	12.2	15.6	27.7	3.5	7	2	1	3	8
Number of Residents per Park	5,298	12,683	15,643	46,579	78,541	66,377	48,091	36,154	144,252
Number of Acres per Park	85.0	206.3	482.7	172	511	102	17.22	121.38	1,105
Square Mileage of Incorporated Jurisdiction	414.8	592.0	795.0	984	759	911	866	558	362
Population of Jurisdiction	489,640	505,255	558,036	558,589	549,784	464,640	432,821	289,234	144,252

Table 3.2. Lancaster County Park Acreage compared to nearby counties. Source: NRPA; County staff.

## County Trail Systems

For trails, the benchmarking process looked to counties both inside and outside of Pennsylvania. Table 3.3 compares Lancaster County's total miles of trails in addition to park acres alongside benchmark counties.

The information available for trails was varied and incomplete so the benchmark comparison is approximate. However, for the information shared, total trail length ranged from 101 miles of total trails to Lancaster's 31.3 miles of trails.

COUNTY	LANCASTER COUNTY	BUCKS COUNTY	DELAWARE COUNTY	MONTGOMERY COUNTY	WASHTENAW COUNTY, MI	LOUDON COUNTY, VA
Total Acres Owned or Managed by the System	<b>1,907</b>	9,000	884	> 6,000	2,152	4,026
Total Miles of Trail Owned or Managed by the System	<b>31.3 mi</b>	88.4 mi	3.5 mi	101 mi (Regional)	(49,296 acres of open space)	83 mi
Total Miles of Paved or Hard Surface Trails	<b>2.8 mi</b>	18.4 mi	n/a	101 mi	Park Trails: 10 mi  B2B Trail: 38mi (*managed by WCPARC and others)	8 mi
Total Miles of Unpaved or Soft Surface Trail	<b>28.5 mi</b>	70 mi	n/a	~30 mi	74 mi	75 mi

Table 3.3: Parks and Trails Comparison. Source: NRPA; County staff, PROS Consulting.

## Budget Comparison

Benchmarking similarly reviewed the funding appropriated to operate and develop the parks and recreation systems of the benchmark agencies. Table 3.4 describes the annual operational per capita and the projected capital improvement budgets for the comparison counties.

COUNTY	LANCASTER COUNTY	BUCKS COUNTY	DELAWARE COUNTY	MONTGOMERY COUNTY	WASHTENAW COUNTY, MI	LOUDON COUNTY, VA
Total Fees, Charges, and Earned Revenue (FY 2023)	<b>\$588,183</b>	\$997,700	\$352,469	\$1,486,179	\$4,758,827	\$33,783,656
Total Operating Expenses	<b>\$3,756,574</b>	\$2,681,000	\$1,746,459	\$8,868,500	\$12,429,273	\$95,150,962
Total Capital Budget (FY 2024)	<b>\$75,593</b>	\$1,997,000	\$3,179,000	\$9,629,433	n/a	\$36,673,000
Total Capital Budget (FY 2023)	<b>\$1,018,000</b>	\$1,845,000	n/a	\$12,103,533	n/a	\$11,803,000
Total Capital Budget (FY 2022)	<b>\$120,000</b>	\$985,000	n/a	\$14,496,800	n/a	\$25,011,000

Table 3.4: Budget Comparison. Source: NRPA; County staff, PROS Consulting.

### Annual Operational Budget

The annual operational budget of the benchmark agencies ranges from \$95,150,962 in Loudon County, VA to \$1,746,459 in Delaware County, PA. While both out of state agencies have higher budgets than the Pennsylvania county agencies, Lancaster County has the second largest budget of the four Pennsylvania counties reviewed.

### Capital Improvements Budget

When comparing recent capital improvement budgets, there is a wide range of spending for the past three years. Loudon County is the outlier in spending, varying from a high of \$36,673,000 in 2024 to a low of \$11,803,000 in 2023. Lancaster County's capital improvement budget varied from a low of \$75,593 in 2024 to a high of \$1,018,000 in 2023.

# 04

**LANCASTER COUNTY PARK AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN**  
**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE COUNTY PARK OR TRAIL?**

COUNTY PARKS		TRAILS	
PLACE A DOT	PLACE A DOT	PLACE A DOT	PLACE A DOT
CENTRAL PARK	PUGH	TRAIL 1	TRAIL 2
HONEY ROCKS	TRAIL 3	TRAIL 4	TRAIL 5
CROCKER PARK	TRAIL 6	TRAIL 7	TRAIL 8

**Be Prepared!**  
It is all about safety to have a safe party but don't forget that they require the presence of most of being prepared!

Consider having a program to learn to for hours and provide along with friends.

Check a list of all your friends and family to see if you can help.

Have a list with your contact information and numbers. Be available for an accident in your area, and directed to a hospital.

Know who your local emergency services are and how to contact them.

**Learning to Live for...  
Living Well and Thriving**  
Monday, May 14, 2018  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

The Morning Agenda will include:  
- Presentation of the new and improved Living Well and Thriving program  
- Introduction and overview of the new and improved Living Well and Thriving program  
- Presentation of the new and improved Living Well and Thriving program  
- Presentation of the new and improved Living Well and Thriving program

**Twin M Construction**  
Custom Remodeling - Design - R  
717-397-4



# ENGAGEMENT

**Public engagement for the PTMP was designed to reach a broad range of residents, stakeholders, and partners through multiple formats and venues. Outreach included a countywide online survey, pop-ups at community events, an in-person open house, and ongoing meetings with an Advisory Committee representing various agencies. In addition, a targeted partnership meeting was held with municipalities, nonprofits, and advocacy organizations to gather technical input and coordinate priorities.**

**Together, these efforts helped ensure the plan reflects community needs, local expertise, and partner perspectives from across the County.**



Pop up at Open Streets Lancaster. Source: Lancaster County.

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

### Open House

An in-person open house was held at the culmination of the planning process to invite public feedback into the final plan's goals, policies and overarching vision. This open house was an opportunity for residents to see the conclusion of the process and see how their inputs via online surveys and other methods was reflected in the plan.

### Pop-Up Events

Pop-up engagement events were held at various gatherings across the county. Residents shared feedback informally by writing comments on boards, taking surveys, reviewing maps, and taking informational postcards about the planning process. Events included Farm and Family Safety Day, Lancaster's Open Streets event, Bike to Work Day, and Ride and Roll, all in 2025.

### ENGAGING THE PLAIN-SECT COMMUNITY

Feedback gathered during the Farm & Family Day highlighted distinct patterns in how members of the plain-sect community use parks, trails, and waterways. Participants shared that they primarily rely on nearby resources, notably the Enola Low Grade Trail and nearby waterways. At the same time, use of County-owned parks and more distant trails is relatively low, with most recreation occurring close to where individuals live, farm, and work. Travel beyond local areas for recreation is uncommon.



Focus group meeting participants. Source: OLIN.



Pop up at Bike to Work Day. Source: Lancaster County.



Participants at the Farm and Family Safety Day. Source: OLIN.

## Online Survey

An online survey was used to gather broad input from residents across Lancaster County on park and trail use, priorities, and investment preferences, allowing participants to respond at their convenience and helping reach a wide audience.

## Advisory Committee Meetings

The PTMP Advisory Committee met three times throughout the planning process to provide ongoing guidance, review findings, and offer technical and local insight. The Advisory Committee represented a range of interests, which included conservation, recreation, agriculture, and state agencies. The Committee provided input in the plan's recommendations and implementation strategies.

## Partnership Meetings

The PTMP team met with key stakeholders and partners in the County in May 2025, presenting an overview of findings to date of future trends, community feedback, and identified partner challenges, needs, and opportunities. There was further discussion on land ownership and potential opportunities in each of the planning areas.

Overall, there was a reinforced notion of the need for coordination action in the face of population growth, limited forested land, and increasing pressure on existing parks and trails. This prompted two additional meetings on the potential of a trails authority or management structure. Implementation of the PTMP depends on strategic prioritization, partnerships, and phasing. Navigating some of the challenges the County faces when it comes to land acquisition and trail gaps requires coordinated approaches and long-term thinking.

## Focus Groups

Throughout the planning process, the consultant team and County staff convened four focus groups to learn more from municipal and community representatives to help shape the vision for focus areas. This included focus groups to refine design concepts for the Conewago to Northwest River Trail and the Conestoga Greenway, as well as online focus groups to discuss expansion opportunities and priorities for Money Rocks County Park and Ted Park Natural Area. Speedway Forge County Park was discussed during an Advisory Committee meeting. These focused discussions provided great value for refining and ground-truthing which concepts were most feasible and consistent with local planning priorities and experiences.



Partnership meeting. Source: OLIN

## ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

4

FOCUS GROUPS

3

POP-UP  
EVENTS

3

ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETINGS

3

PARTNERSHIP  
MEETINGS

1

OPEN  
HOUSE

1,326

ONLINE SURVEY  
RESPONSES

## What We Heard

### Key Challenges

» Across organizations, common challenges include **rising maintenance costs**, reliance on volunteers, stagnant or **insufficient funding** for basic infrastructure (such as parking and signage), and **growing visitation** that strains land, neighbors, and emergency response systems.

» **Enforcement gaps, inaccurate parcel data, and user conflicts**, particularly around hunting, dogs, and multi-use compatibility, were recurring concerns.

» **Emergency response and search-and-rescue demands** on preserves were highlighted as a growing burden, especially given limited volunteer and state police capacity.

### Investment Priorities

» Participants stressed the importance of **closing trail gaps, improving blue/greenway connectivity**, and identifying opportunities **where trails could coexist** with agricultural easements or natural land preservation.

» Protecting and restoring natural areas while accommodating recreation was viewed as a central **balancing act**.

### Partnership Models/Funding Opportunities

» There was broad support for **more formalized partnership structures**, including centralized entities to hold trail easements and coordinate management across jurisdictions.

» Participants discussed land transfers, shared easements, and phased or piecemeal acquisition strategies as **realistic approaches** in a landscape dominated by private ownership and preserved farmland.

» **New funding mechanisms** such as countywide recreation taxes, revolving funds, and state-local match programs were highlighted as necessary to supplement limited traditional funding sources.

# ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey for the Parks and Trails Master Plan was conducted between April 1, 2025 and June 3, 2025. The survey asked participants how they used County parks and trails, what barriers prevent use, and where future investments should be prioritized. Input was also gathered on desired park and trail improvements and where key priority trail gaps should be addressed.

There were a total of 1,326 responses with the majority of respondents living in the Metro area as well as the Northeast. Many respondents have lived in Lancaster for more than 30 years and the average participant was between the ages of 35 and 54. The majority of the respondents were white with higher education levels, including a bachelor's degree.



## Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Survey

Lancaster County is undertaking a Parks and Trails Master Plan this year. The purpose of this plan is to review existing County-owned parks and the overall trail network in the county, evaluate current and future recreation needs, and identify opportunities for growth and connection. In coordination with other County, State, and nonprofit regional open space plans and partners, this plan will help guide decision-making for parks and trails in the future.

Today, we'd like to find out more about how you currently use Lancaster County parks and trails.

County Parks include:

- Central Park
- Buchmiller Park
- Theodore A. Parker III Natural Area (Ted Parker Natural Area)
- Money Rocks
- Speedwell Forge
- Chickies Rock

Online survey. Source: OLIN.



Conestoga River. Source: Conestoga River Club.

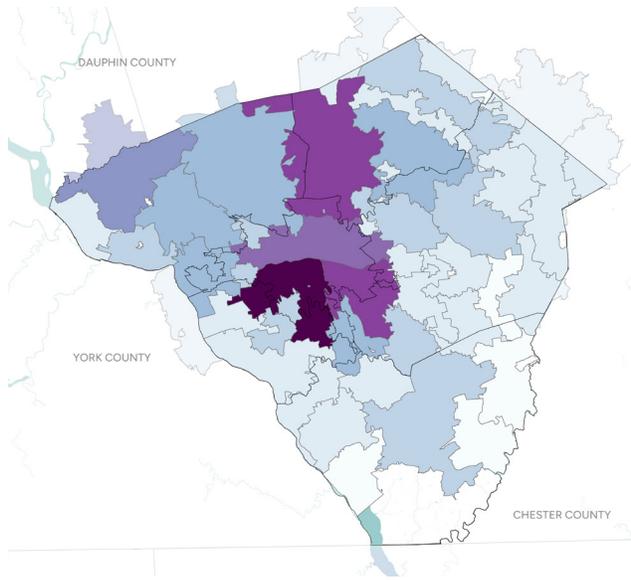
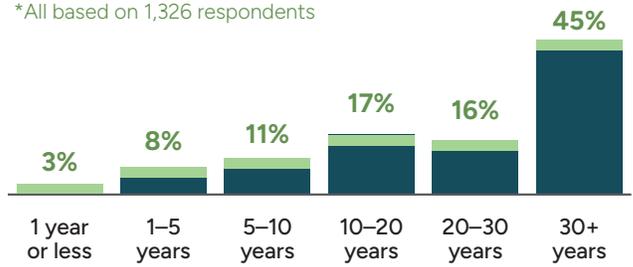
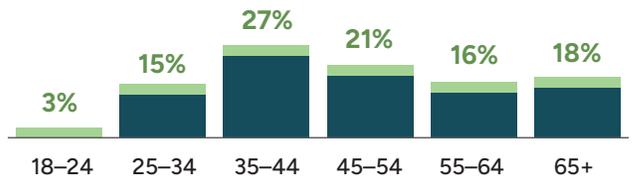


Figure 4.1: Online Survey Respondents Locations. Source: OLIN.

\*All based on 1,326 respondents



Figures 4.2: Survey Respondents' Length of Residency. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.



Figures 4.3: Survey Respondents' Age. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

## Years Lived in Lancaster County

» More than half of survey respondents are long-term Lancaster County residents.

## Age

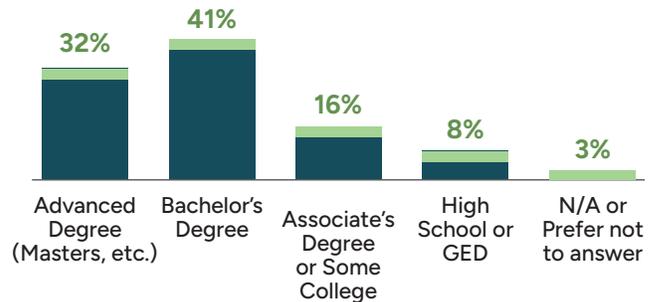
» Residents across generations participated in the online survey.

## Highest Level of Education

» Most respondents have had at least some college education.

## Race / Ethnicity

» The large majority of respondents self identified as white.



Figures 4.4: Survey Respondents' Educational Attainment. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

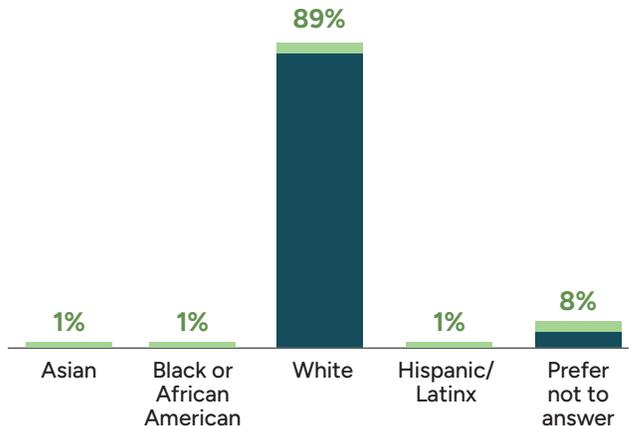


Figure 4.5: Survey Respondents Racial/ Ethnic Identity. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK: PARKS

## Park Visitorship

» The majority of respondents (94%) have visited County parks, with the highest percentage of visitorship to Chickies Rock and Central Park. Ted Parker saw the lowest number of visitors, with only 13% of respondents having visited the park.

OVER **94%** OF RESPONDERS VISIT LANCASTER COUNTY PARKS

CHICKIES ROCK & CENTRAL PARK ARE MOST VISITED AND RANK HIGHEST AS “**FAVORITES**”

## Favorite Parks

» Chickies Rock and Central Park also ranked as participants favorite park, noting features like ease of access, variety of activities offered, park amenities, views, and proximity to nature as reasons.

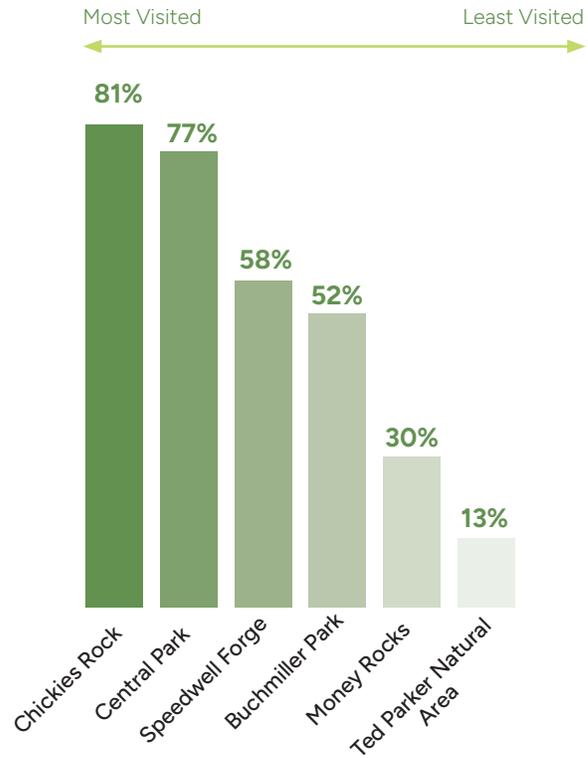


Figure 4.6: Park Visitorship. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

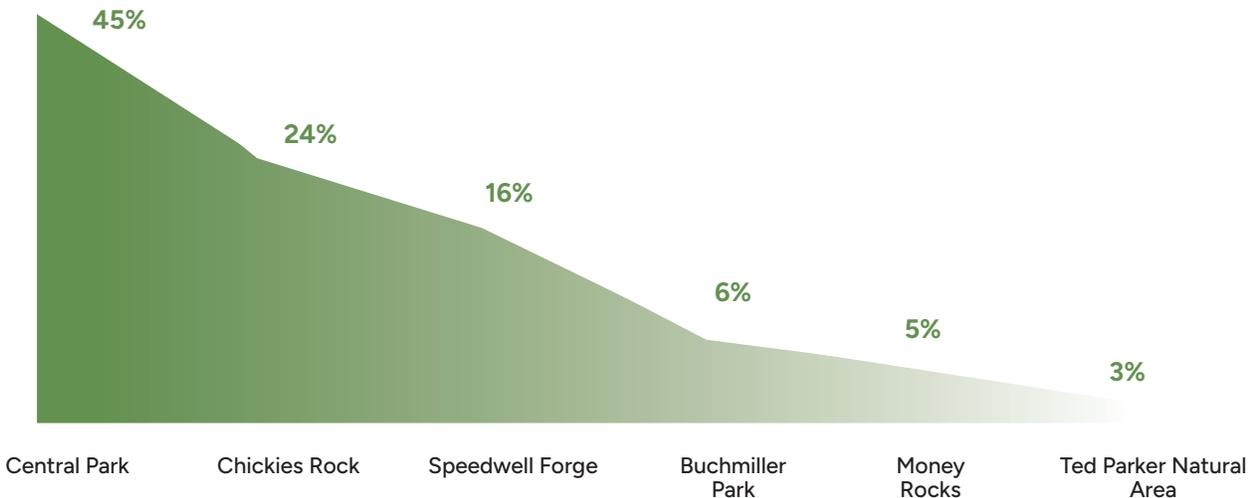


Figure 4.7: Favorite Park. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

## Visitation Frequency

» A little under half of the respondents visit County parks monthly, with an additional 20% visiting weekly and a small number visiting daily—suggesting parks play a consistent role in routine recreation for many households.

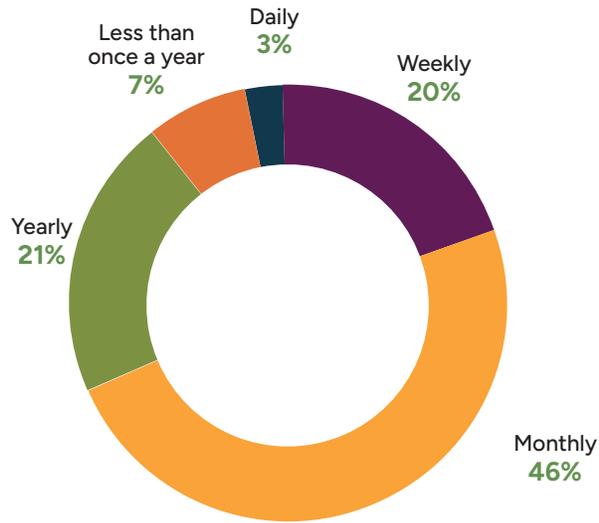


Figure 4.8: Park Visitation Frequency. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

**MOST RESPONDENTS VISIT PARKS MONTHLY, ... AND DRIVE 10-20 MINUTES TO GET THERE.**

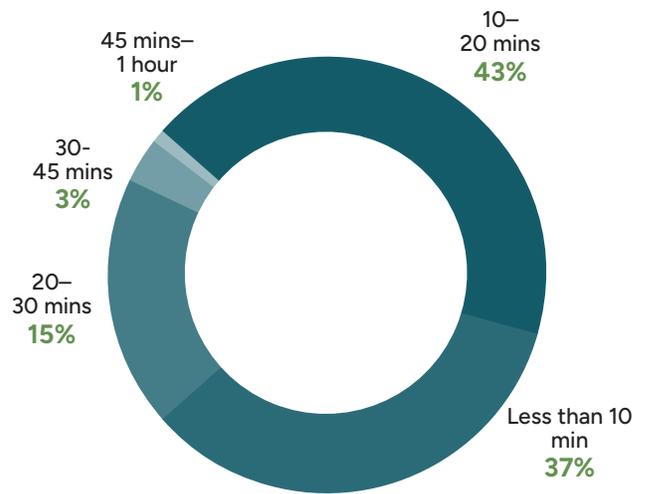


Figure 4.9: Park Travel Time. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

## Park Access: Transportation

» Residents are also willing to travel modest distances to County parks. Most respondents reported short travel times to parks, with 37% driving less than 10 minutes and 43% driving 10-20 minutes. Only a small share of respondents travel more than 30 minutes.



Central Park. Source: Lancaster County.

## Park Investment

» Respondents showed strong support for investing in both the quality and reach of the County park system, with the highest priority placed on protecting and restoring natural areas (52%), followed by improving existing parks (49%) and identifying new park locations (48%). Respondents also expressed a clear preference for future investments that expand everyday, nature-based experiences. A high priority was walking and hiking trails (85%), along with natural areas (57%), wildlife and natural resource protection (56%), scenic views (52%), and water access (49%).

**PROTECTING/ RESTORING  
NATURAL AREAS IS THE HIGHEST  
PRIORITY FOR PARK INVESTMENT**

**Table 4.1: Investment Focus**

Protect and/or restore natural areas in parks	52%
Improve existing parks	49%
Identify new locations for parks	48%
Expand existing parks	32%
Other	2%

**Table 4.2: Activities**

Walking/Hiking trails	85%
Natural areas	57%
Wildlife and/or natural resources protection	56%
Scenic areas or vistas	52%
Water Access (fishing, kayaking, etc.)	49%
Quiet, individual activities (e.g. birdwatching, reading, observing nature, meditating, drawing, or painting)	48%
Educational programs	37%
Active recreation/sports activities (playgrounds, ballfields)	28%
Community event spaces	22%
Hunting or fishing	11%
Equestrian/Horse Trails	6%
Other	6% - Mountain biking, restrooms, etc.



Universally Accessible Lloyd Clark Trail. Source: Lancaster Conservancy (Credit: Nick Gould).

# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK: TRAILS

## Trail Visitorship

» Among respondents, the Enola Low Grade trail, Northwest River Trail, and Warwick to Ephrata Rail Trail ranked as having the highest visitorship (72%, 62%, and 60%, respectively). At the same time, the Northwest River Trail stands out as users' "favorite" trail (26%), suggesting it combines high use with a particularly strong user experience. Respondents pointed to proximity and easy access, scenic views and connection to nature, and the type and quality of the trail surface as key factors shaping both visitation and trail preference.

**NORTHWEST RIVER TRAIL IS TOP FAVORITE, WHILE THE ENOLA LOW GRADE, NWRT, AND WARWICK TO EPHRATA HAVE HIGHEST VISITORSHIP**

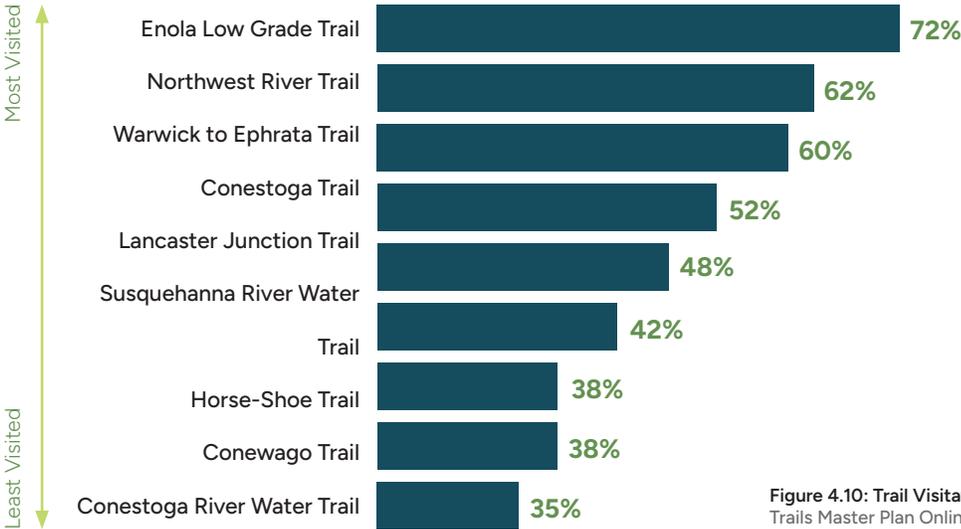


Figure 4.10: Trail Visitation. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

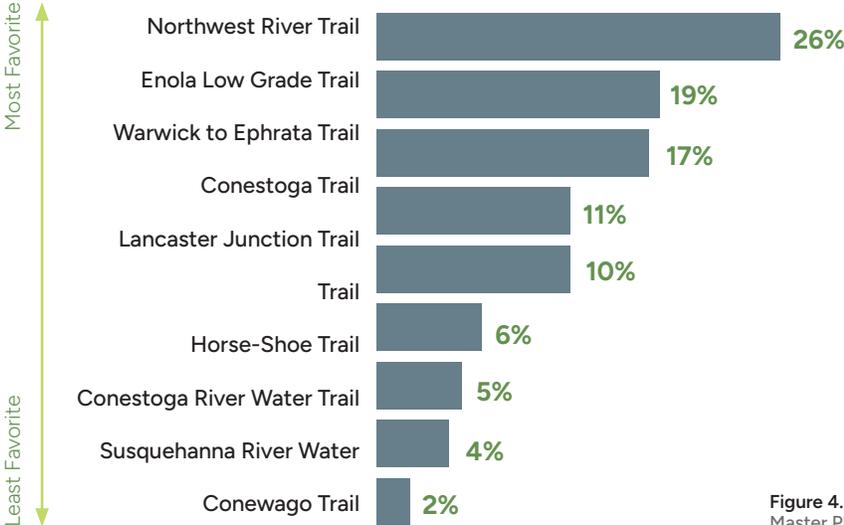


Figure 4.11: Trail Favorites. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

## Trail Activities

» Respondents mostly use trails for walking/hiking (85%), followed by cycling (46%) and wildlife viewing (35%). Smaller shares of respondents use trails for running (20%) and kayaking (19%), while activities like mountain biking (10%) and e-biking (5%) represent more specialized use.

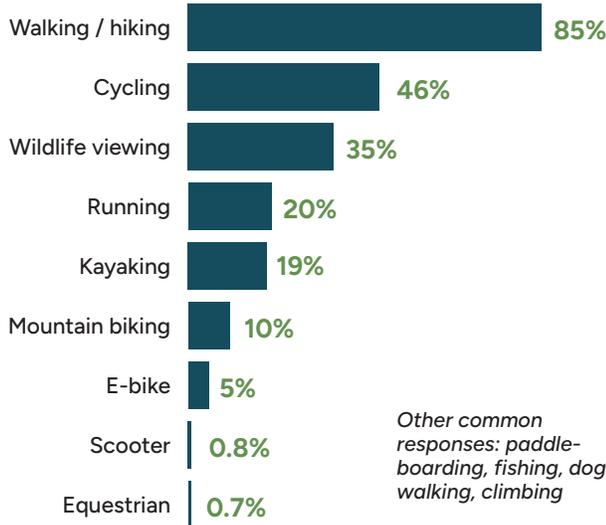


Figure 4.12: Trail Activities. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

## Trail Investment

» Respondents prioritized closing gaps between existing trails (58%) and improving connections to urbanized areas (44%), signaling that connectivity and access are top needs. Additional support for protecting or restoring natural resources along trails (38%) and developing more trails (32%) suggests residents value both network expansion and the environmental quality of trail corridors, with comparatively less emphasis on general upgrades to existing trails (26%).

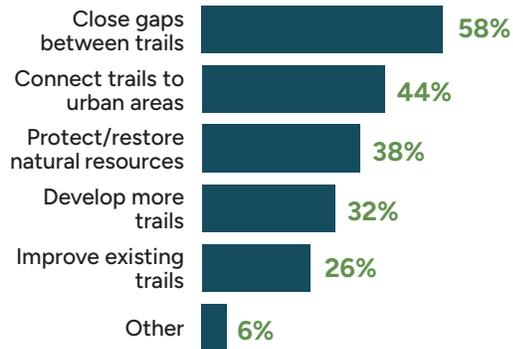


Figure 4.13: Trail Investment Priorities. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.



Enola Low Grade Trail. Source: Lancaster County.



Point Rock Tunnel along the Northwest River Trail. Source: Lancaster County.

### Trail Access

» Trail access is still highly vehicle-dependent, with 95% of respondents reporting they typically drive to reach trails. Far fewer respondents access trails by biking (18%) or walking/running (14%), and use of e-bikes (2%) and public transit (1%) is minimal.

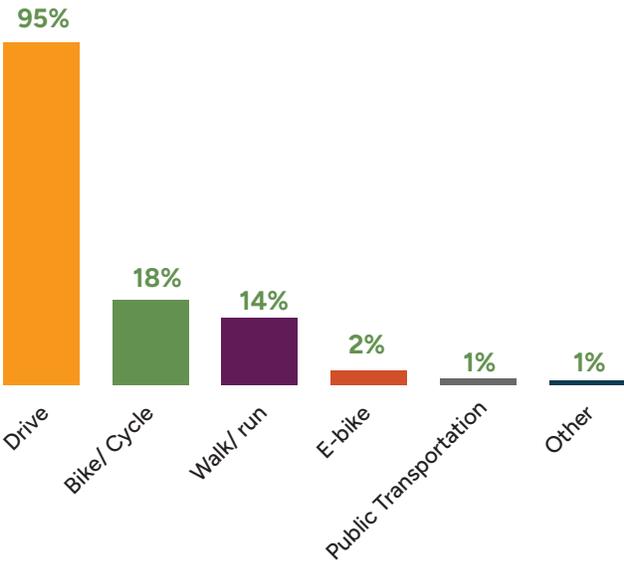


Figure 4.14: Trail Access. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

### Travel Time

» Travel times are generally short. 44% report traveling less than 10 minutes and another 43% travel 10–20 minutes, meaning most users can reach a trail within 20 minutes, but primarily by car.

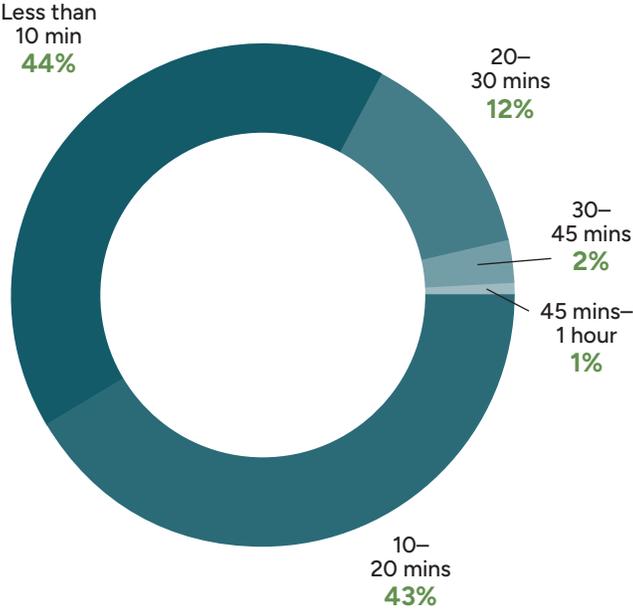


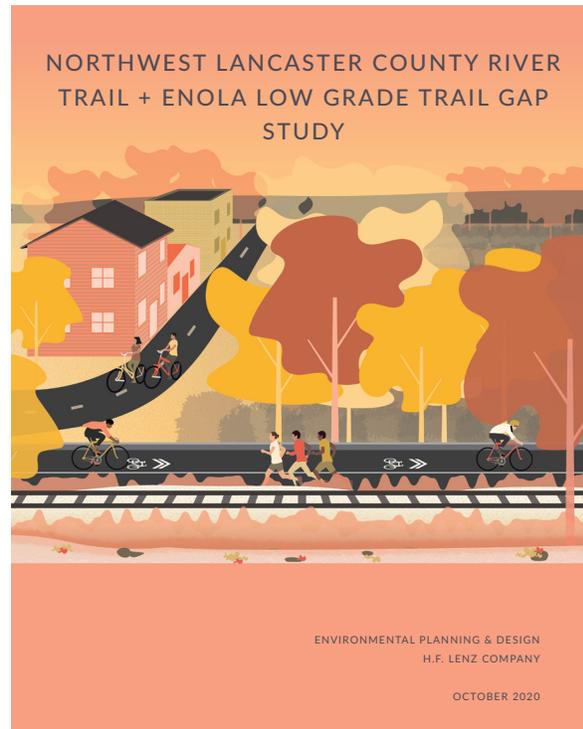
Figure 4.15: Trail Travel Time. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

## Priority Trail Gaps

» Residents placed high value on closing a small number of key gaps that would significantly strengthen regional connectivity, ranking the Enola Low Grade to Northwest River Trail as the highest priority trail gap to complete (37%), followed by the Lancaster Heritage Pathway (18%). The Enola Low Grade to Northwest River Trail gap has already been studied as the primary focus of a prior plan, and therefore not addressed in a detailed manner as a part of this plan.

» The Buchmiller Park Connector and Conewago to Northwest River Trail gap were also ranked as priorities (13% and 11% respectively).

» Lower support was shown for the Warwick to Ephrata Trail gap (9%) and the Ephrata–Denver Gap (8%), while the Money Rocks County Park Connector was identified least often (4%).



Enola Low Grade Trail - NRWT Gap Study. Source: Manor Township.

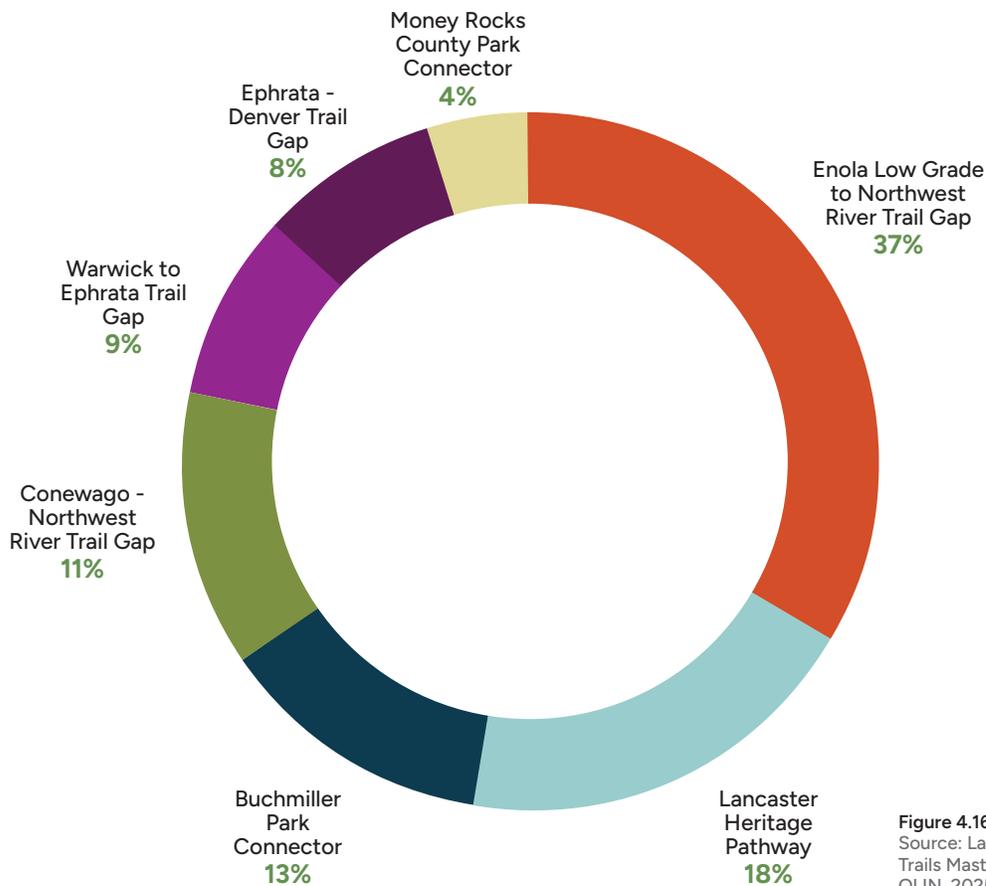


Figure 4.16: Priority Trail Gaps. Source: Lancaster County Parks & Trails Master Plan Online Survey, OLIN, 2025.

SUPPORT TO  
PRIORITIZE CREATING  
BETTER ACCESS  
TO STREAMS AND  
RIVERS FOR ACTIVITIES  
SUCH AS CANOEING,  
KAYAKING AND FISHING

**75%**  
**YES**

LIKELIHOOD OF USING  
TRAILS IF LOCATED  
CLOSER TO HOME

**88%**  
**YES**

SUPPORT FOR  
ADDITIONAL PUBLIC  
FUNDING FOR PARKS  
AND TRAILS IN  
LANCASTER COUNTY

**89%**  
**YES**



Ted Parker Natural Area. Source: Lancaster County.

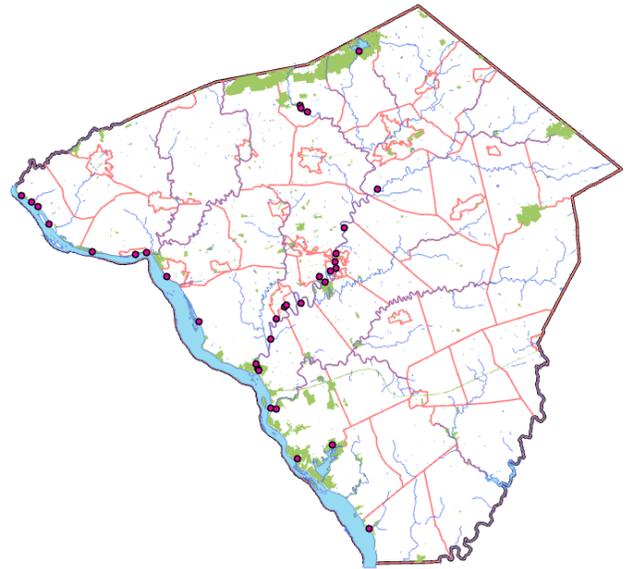


Figure 4.17: Water Trail Access Points. Source: Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan Lancaster EDC.

# 05

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Elizabethtown Borough. Source: OLIN.

# **VISION, GOALS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The following goals, recommendations, and associated actions were developed following data analysis and community input. The team reviewed existing conditions to understand how trails and County parkland are currently distributed across the county, while a Level of Service (LOS) analysis helped identify gaps in access and areas with greatest needs.**

**These findings were further informed by input from the Advisory Committee and feedback gathered through public engagement. Together, this process ensures these goals reflect current conditions and County priorities, and work to support a well-connected and accessible trail and park system for the future.**

# A VISION FOR LANCASTER COUNTY

**Lancaster County is envisioned to be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, renowned for its interconnected and resilient system of parks, trails, and nature preserves. This system will strategically support economic vitality, preserve scenic landscapes and important natural resources, and foster a vibrant, inclusive community by ensuring accessible, well-maintained recreational assets are available to all residents and visitors for generations to come.**

Source: OLIN.

# PLAN GOALS

## A Framework for Action

The following seven goals establish a balanced framework for growing and strengthening the County’s parks and trail system. The goals emphasize planning for future population growth, improving access to outdoor recreation for all residents, and strengthening connections between trails, parks, waterways, and communities.

They also recognize the role of parks and trails in supporting local economies, protecting and restoring natural resources, and encouraging continued investment in public spaces.

Finally, the goals highlight the importance of collaboration and local stewardship to ensure parks and trails are well managed, protected, and responsive to community needs over time.



**GROWTH**



**ACCESS**



**ECONOMY**



**CONNECTIONS**



**NATURE**



**INVESTMENT**



**ADVOCACY**



Shocks Mill Walkway. Source: Dirch Harris.



Prothonotary warbler at Clark Nature Preserve. Source: Lancaster Conservancy (Credit: Kerry Givens).



Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge. Source: Lancaster County.

# GROWTH



**Ensure the availability of sufficient and accessible county parkland to meet the current and future recreational needs of Lancaster County residents, in alignment with projected population growth.**

## **1.1 Continue the adopted standard of 5 acres per 1,000 individuals, as a guideline for county-owned parkland.**

The County should continue to use the adopted standard of five acres of county-owned parkland per 1,000 residents from the 1992 plan as a guiding benchmark for long-term planning and investment. This standard provides a consistent, data-driven framework for evaluating current County parkland acreage, identifying service gaps, and prioritizing future land acquisition and trail development as the County grows. The standard also offers an important reference point to ensure equitable access to parks, trails, and open space across Lancaster County communities.

- » **1.1.1** Maintain an up-to-date inventory of public, semi-public (i.e. utility lands, authority lands, etc.), and private non-profit outdoor recreation land in Lancaster County
- » **1.1.2** Assess parkland acreage and distribution annually using population growth projections and adopted level-of-service standards in each planning region.
- » **1.1.3** Publish results of the annual park assessment on the County Planning Department's public-facing Data Dashboard landing page.

## 1.2 Acquire available land around the county's core parklands to meet existing and future Level of Service (LOS) needs and address service gaps.

Expanding Lancaster County's existing parkland will improve access for communities, enhance connectivity between trails and parks, and address identified service gaps in underserved areas. Focusing acquisition efforts near the County's parks allows the County to build upon existing investments, reduce long-term maintenance costs, and create larger, functional open space and trail networks that can adapt to future growth.

- » **1.2.1** Work with landowners and possibly other outdoor recreation partners to acquire parcels identified in the master plan.
- » **1.2.2** Leverage DCNR and Highlands Funding to the greatest extent necessary for new park land acquisitions.

## 1.3 Consider acquiring new parks when large landholdings such as private golf courses, campgrounds, utility lands, and authority holdings become available, especially in areas of greatest need.

Large landholdings offer opportunities to create new parkland, expand trail networks and connect to existing parks, and preserve open space at a scale that is difficult to achieve through incremental acquisition. While these opportunities may be infrequent, they can be consequential and prioritizing these acquisition opportunities can help advance access and address service gaps.

- » **1.3.1** Maintain inventory of large parcels adjacent to parks, suitable for new parks, or recreation lands lacking permanent protection that could become available in the future. (See 6.2.2)
- » **1.3.2** Use tools such as "right-of-first refusal" agreements to acquire suitable future parkland when it becomes available.

## 1.4 Focus on natural-resource-based land acquisitions for passive outdoor recreation opportunities

Lands with significant natural resources, such as forested areas and waterways, can support passive outdoor recreation and trail opportunities. These areas can provide opportunities for walking, hiking, kayaking, nature observation, and educational elements. Nature-based acquisitions can also help preserve critical habitat and ecological areas while ensuring access to low-impact recreation that complements the County's existing trail and park system.

- » **1.4.1** Utilize ecological analysis to target ecological investment areas. This includes high biodiversity areas; core habitat areas; climate resilient, environmentally sensitive areas such as streams and steep slopes; and corridors that connect these ecologically valuable resources.



Utility lands in Lancaster County. Source: OLIN.

# ACCESS



## Enhance access and multimodal opportunities to outdoor recreation opportunities to meet the needs and improve the wellbeing of all county residents.

### 2.1 Use planning areas to ensure that parkland acreage is distributed equitably to individuals living across the County.

Lancaster County should use delineated planning areas (South, West, East, Northeast, Northwest, Metro) as the geographic framework for consistently assessing current parkland acreage as well as parkland supply and demand. This helps identify priority deficit areas and informs targeted acquisition and investment decisions to achieve a more equitable spatial distribution of county-owned parkland and access to trails.

- » **2.1.1** Consult population projections to focus parkland acquisition in areas of greatest need.
- » **2.1.2** Advocate for county parkland to be distributed across the county so that every resident is within a 10-mile radius of a county park or large Lancaster Conservancy Nature Preserve.
- » **2.1.3** Work with partner organizations and municipalities to address parkland deficits in regions of the county where existing park acreage is below the current LOS standard and projected growth.
- » **2.1.4** Identify opportunities for parkland expansion along existing and proposed trails to meet acreage needs in the Northwest, West, and Metro regions. Partner with the Lancaster Conservancy, state agencies and municipalities to create or expand nature preserves along existing trails, like the Conewago Trail and the Northwest River Trail.
- » **2.1.5.** Monitor the availability of large unprotected natural resource areas such as lands adjacent to Game Lands 156, the Octoraro Reservoir, and Muddy Run Lake for opportunities to add to the county's outdoor recreation portfolio.

### 2.2 Prioritize acquiring parkland in the Metro area to align with the greatest concentration of diverse populations in the County.

The Metro area contains the County's largest population and is projected to experience the greatest growth, yet it also has one of the more significant parkland deficits among the planning areas. Although County-owned parks such as Central Park and Buchmiller Park serve Metro residents, they are mostly located outside the Metro planning area and function as assets that also serve residents from surrounding planning areas. To address documented gaps and improve access, the County should prioritize parkland acquisition within the Metro area where additional acreage can deliver the greatest community benefit.

- » **2.2.1** Evaluate park and trail opportunities for development with Lancaster City and adjoining municipalities and recreational partners.



Central Park Community Gardens; Source: Lancaster Online (Chris Knight).

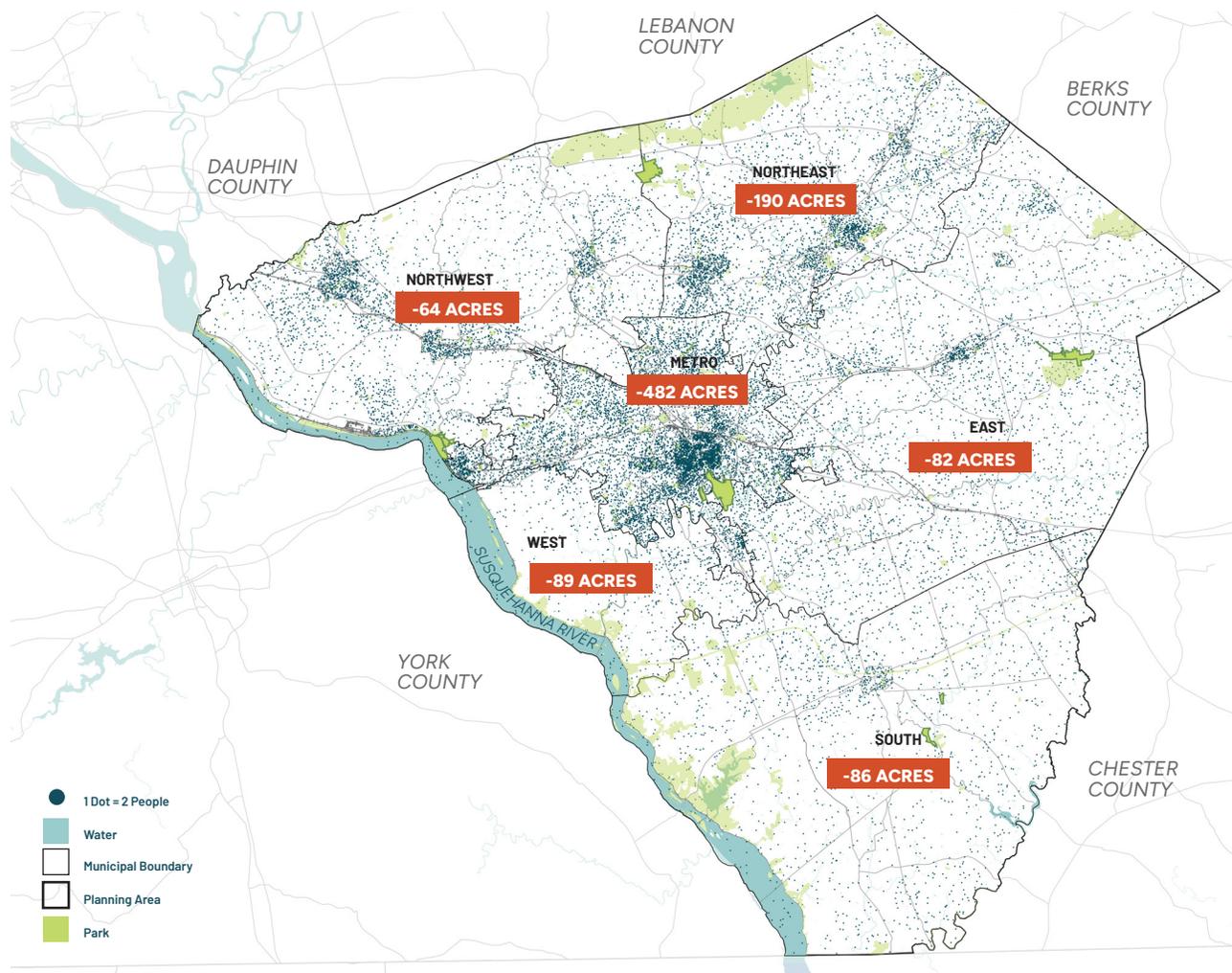


Figure 5.1: Target parkland acreage by planning area. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

### 2.3 Work with municipalities to add parkland in projected high growth areas where acreage is needed.

Coordination between the County and local municipalities can help plan and implement parkland expansion where additional acreage is needed. This coordination should be supported with local comprehensive plans and zoning tools to align shared LOS targets and address local community and demographic needs. Where feasible, the County should also help municipalities identify sustainable funding and implementation mechanisms to ensure park and trail assets keep pace with future growth.

» **2.3.1** Encourage municipalities to adopt a level-of-service standard of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

» **2.3.2** Encourage municipalities to focus on providing “active” outdoor recreation opportunities for their residents, based on their individual demographic profile.

» **2.3.3** Work with local municipalities to include new parkland in Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budgets.

» **2.3.4** Encourage municipalities to identify new neighborhood and community park opportunities in local plans.

» **2.3.5** Encourage municipalities to consider using an Earned Income Tax, subject to voter referendum, to fund municipal park and trail acquisition and development. (See 7.5.1)

» **2.3.6** Encourage municipalities to adopt mandatory dedication of land ordinances to add parkland to serve residents in new developments as they are constructed.

## UNIVERSAL ACCESS TRAILS

**A universal access trail is a trail designed and built to be usable by people of all abilities, including those with mobility, vision, or other physical limitations. It typically meets accessibility standards (like ADA guidelines) and includes features such as gentle slopes, firm and stable surfaces, and adequate width for wheelchairs or mobility devices**

### I. Design & Construction Principles

- Use a smooth, packed, and firm surface.
- Maintain an easy, gentle grade.
- Ensure the path is clear, wide, and free of obstacles.

### II. Responsible User Conduct

- Park only in designated parking areas.
- Prioritize accessible parking and trail access for those who need it.
- Prohibit horses and bicycles to protect the trail surface.
- Use hiking poles gently.
- Require prior approval for large groups.
- Keep dogs on a leash at all times.
- Pack out all waste, including dog waste.
- Prohibit music, drones, and amplified sounds.



Mill Creek Universal Access Trail; Source: Lancaster Conservancy.

## 2.4 Connect with diverse populations to better understand how to make County parks more welcoming to Lancaster Countians of all backgrounds.

Lancaster County is home to a diverse population. A targeted engagement approach can inform the County how residents of different ages, abilities, languages, and cultural backgrounds experience County parks and trails, as well as what changes would create a more welcoming, relevant, and enjoyable experience. Demographic analysis and focused outreach to historically underrepresented communities should support this public outreach.

» **2.4.1** Utilize demographic analysis to understand population dynamics, ensuring that all populations, inclusive of age, ability, and background, have nearby access to high quality outdoor recreation assets.

» **2.4.2** Conduct focused community outreach to county identity communities (non-white, limited English proficiency, people with disabilities) to better understand recreational needs.

» **2.4.3** Install features in parks that match these community concerns.

» **2.4.4** Include intergenerational programming in parks.

## 2.5 Strive to provide accessible options, where appropriate, in County parks.

The County should advance a consistent approach to accessibility across its park and trails system. Evaluating existing accessibility conditions and integrating accessible design into future parks, trails, and overall maintenance/improvements will allow the County to establish a clear framework for prioritizing upgrades, reducing barriers, and expanding inclusive recreation opportunities.

» **2.5.1** Conduct an accessibility inventory of existing parks.

» **2.5.2** Advocate for the development of accessibility standards for County and municipal parks, to include ADA accessible amenities, such as bathrooms, ramps, benches and activities.

» **2.5.3** Encourage the development of Universal Access Trails (both land and water) and support their construction where appropriate.

# ECONOMY



## Leverage outdoor recreation resources to expand business and job opportunities, to attract tourists, and to improve the economic health and vitality of Lancaster County communities.

### 3.1 Support the implementation of the Lancaster County Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan prepared by Lancaster EDC, ensuring initiatives are coordinated with and reinforce the plan's action areas of promoting the outdoors, activating assets, connecting businesses, stewarding assets, and monitoring impacts.

Lancaster County should coordinate with Lancaster EDC to advance and amplify the Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan and align park and trail initiatives with its priority action areas. By positioning parks, trails, and open space as community infrastructure that drives local economies and strengthens nearby commercial districts, the County can build broader alignment around acquisition, connectivity, and amenity improvements that expand the outdoor recreation economy.

» **3.1.1** Highlight the economic benefits of investing in parks, trails and open space resources as talking points for negotiating with municipalities, landowners and public officials for the acquisition of new parcels and connections.

» **3.1.2** Partner with the real estate community to underscore the importance of parks and open space resources to welcome new Lancaster Countians.

» **3.1.3** Support the development of a Trail Towns program to promote economic development for municipalities adjacent to current and future regional trails.

» **3.1.4** Advocate for amenities to support recreational tourism, such as overnight stays, bike parking, and outfitting businesses near County parks and trails.

» **3.1.5** Monitor and report the use of regional trails by installing trail counters where possible.

### 3.2 Partner with Discover Lancaster and other local marketing entities to promote County parks and trails.

Parks and trails can be signature visitor experiences that complement the County's existing tourism strengths. Strategic promotion of parks and trails can increase visitation, extend length of stay, and direct spending to nearby downtowns and businesses. Coordinated campaigns and programmed events can also build local pride and repeat use, reinforcing parks and trails as both recreational assets and drivers of economic activity.

» **3.2.1** Highlight current and future recreational resources in local tourism materials.

» **3.2.2** Partner to organize and promote special events that highlight parks, trails, and open spaces alongside food, art and vendors to draw tourists and bring local residents together in community spaces.



Chickies Rock Outfitters; Source: Lancaster County.

# CONNECTIONS



**Connect the land and water trail networks to enhance connectivity to urban areas, access points and other trail and transportation systems.**

## 4.1 Close the gaps between regional trails and connect them to urban centers and large parks where possible.

Lancaster County should prioritize completion of a countywide trail network and focus on critical gap closures that connect existing regional trail segments to urban centers and major parks. Closing these gaps enhances safe access to key destinations and strengthens the trail system's function as both recreation infrastructure and an everyday mobility option. Achieving this will require various coordinated strategies. The Countywide trail map should be used to set priorities, advance partnerships to secure alignments, and align municipal planning and funding so these gaps can move from concept to implementation.

DAUPHIN COUNTY

NORTHWEST

NORTHWEST RIVER TRAIL

CONEWAGO TRAIL

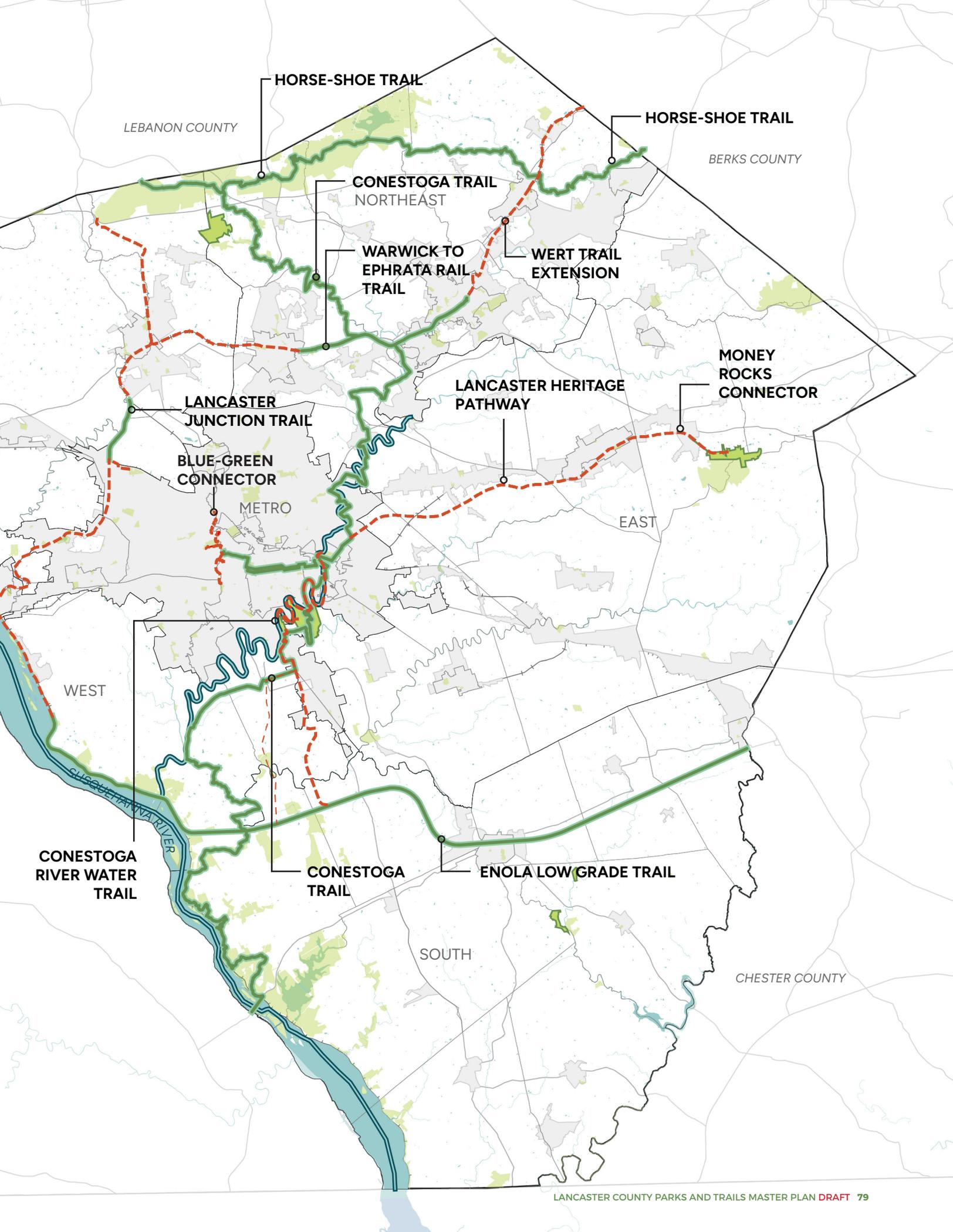
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER WATER TRAIL

YORK COUNTY

### LEGEND

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Parks/Open Space   | <b>EXISTING TRAILS</b>   |
|  Urban Growth Area  |  Trail                            |
|  Water              |  Water Trail                      |
|  Municipal Boundary | <b>PROPOSED TRAILS</b>   |
|  Major Road         |  Proposed Trail (Preferred)       |
|  |  Proposed Trail (Alternate Route) |

Figure 5.2: Countywide Trail Network. Source: Trails, Lancaster County; County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails, PASDA. Roads, Highways: US Census Bureau, 2025.



- » **4.1.1** Utilize the Countywide trail map to guide future trail planning and close critical gaps.
- » **4.1.2** Secure necessary trail rights-of-way through easements and partnerships with local landowners and advocacy organizations.
- » **4.1.3** Encourage municipalities to identify new trail opportunities in local plans and in local Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budgets, for implementation.
- » **4.1.4.** Support the implementation of the Conestoga River Water Trail Access Improvement Plan prepared by the Conestoga River Club.
- » **4.1.5** Annually track new miles of trail added across the County.

## **4.2 Connect trails in the county to trails in neighboring counties to extend the regional network.**

Cross-county connections expand the reach of the regional trail network. This supports longer-distance recreation and tourism, and improves access to regional destinations and transportation hubs. This work needs to be pursued through coordinated planning and shared implementation and funding strategies with adjacent counties, state agencies, and trail organizations.

- » **4.2.1** Work with York, Dauphin, and Chester counties, state agencies and trail organizations to coordinate planning efforts, and pursue joint funding opportunities.
- » **4.2.2** Coordinate with state and regional efforts such as the 9/11 Trail, Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and the Schuylkill to Susquehanna Greenway.

## **4.3 Support the implementation of the Lancaster County Traffic Safety Action Plan alongside any other future trail planning efforts that improve the safety of trail users in the County and region.**

Collaborating with necessary partners on the Lancaster County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Traffic Safety Plan on plan implementation can help prioritize recommended safety strategies and target investments where trail user exposure and risk are highest.

- » **4.3.1** Work with partners to implement the Traffic Safety Action Plan, especially near County parks and trails.

## **4.4 Expand cross-agency communication with the Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA), and other relevant municipal/ City/County agencies to align trail efforts.**

Lancaster County should strengthen ongoing coordination with the City of Lancaster, other municipalities, RRTA, and other relevant agencies to better align trail planning, design, and implementation across jurisdictions. Regular information-sharing can advance projects that focus on priority connections and improve multimodal access by integrating transit service with major trailheads.

- » **4.4.1** Share plans and participate in regular meetings to track progress.
- » **4.4.2** Encourage RRTA to incorporate stops and major trailheads to enhance access to the regional trail network.

## **4.5 Consider new land and water trail opportunities and connections.**

With a wealth of renowned water trails, such as the Conestoga and Susquehanna River Water Trails, linking water and land trails together helps to complete the trail network and provide residents and visitors with a wealth of recreational opportunities. Ideally land trails can be planned to intersect with water trail boat launches and access points to create this contiguous network.

- » **4.5.1** Regularly re-evaluate new land and water trail opportunities for consideration.

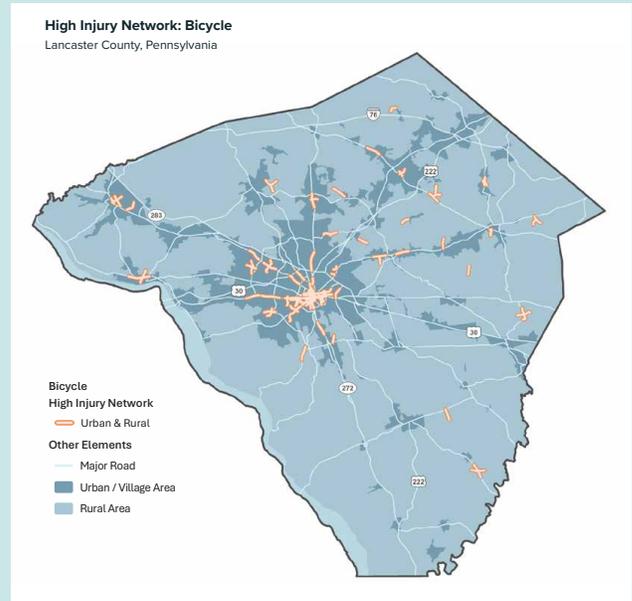


Kayakers on the Conestoga River Water Trail. Source: Conestoga River Club.

## TRAFFIC SAFETY ACTION PLAN

Concurrently with the Parks and Trails Master Plan, Lancaster County developed a Traffic Safety Action Plan, focused on reducing safety concerns on Lancaster County roads, particularly for multi-modal cyclists, pedestrians, and those who use horse-drawn transportation.

The PTMP incorporated some of this analysis, including high-injury networks, into the planning for new trail concepts.



A diversity of trail types in Lancaster County. Source: Lancaster County.

# NATURE



## Protect and restore natural resource systems-waterways, wildlife habitat, and core forests-within and adjacent to parks and trails.

### 5.1 Invest in restoring or enhancing the natural resources within the County's existing parks.

By investing and improving the health of forests and waterways within County parks and protecting connected natural systems nearby, the County can increase habitat continuity, enhance water quality, and improve resilience to flooding, erosion, and extreme weather. This investment reinforces the environmental role of parks over time while maintaining high-quality outdoor experiences for residents and visitors.

- » **5.1.1** Acquire conservation easements where needed on lands adjacent to County parks to protect scenic landscapes and environmentally sensitive natural resources.
- » **5.1.2** Develop stewardship strategies for each of the County's parks to enhance ecological services including increased woodlands, tree canopy, management of invasive species, restoring streams, wetlands and floodplain connectivity.
- » **5.1.3** Restore natural areas within County parks by gradually converting excess lawn areas and agricultural lands to their natural state.
- » **5.1.4** Enlist volunteer or community organizations to assist with the protection and stewardship of natural resources in County parks to reduce invasive species, restore riparian areas, and increase tree canopy.
- » **5.1.5** Incorporate green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, bioswales, native tree plantings, and other nature-based stormwater management, into the planning, design, and maintenance of County parks and trails to manage stormwater, improve water quality, enhance habitat, and strengthen climate resilience.

### 5.2 Encourage municipalities to incorporate ecologically important natural lands suitable for passive recreation opportunities into existing or new parks.

A conservation-first approach elevates the role of ecology into the County's park planning process. Integrating natural lands into parks retains environmental value and function, enhances recreational opportunities, and strengthens landscape character. This approach can help municipalities grow their park systems without compromising the natural assets that make them distinctive.

- » **5.2.1** Share ecological analysis with municipalities to help them target important natural lands in park plans and minimize disruption of environmentally sensitive areas such as streams, riparian areas, and tree canopy when developing parkland for active recreation. Consider including elements of passive recreation within municipal parkland to protect and highlight these areas.
- » **5.2.2** Encourage municipalities to protect scenic agricultural lands adjacent to parks and trails that contribute to the County's cultural landscape assets. Explore strategies such as conservation easements or partnerships with landowners to protect viewsheds, rural character, and the visual connection between open space and agricultural land.

### 5.3 Enhance biodiversity, wildlife habitat, stream restoration, and natural resource protection along trails.

Natural resource protection is crucial for the health of the County's lands. Applying ecologically sensitive design principles will minimize impacts during development and create trail experiences that reinforce stream health, wildlife movement, and long-term landscape resilience.

» **5.3.1** Adopt ecologically sensitive design principles for trail development. (See Figure 5.3)

**5.4 Coordinate with regional natural resource conservation entities to comprehensively address biodiversity and ecosystems services.**

The County should align park and trail stewardship with regional conservation efforts in order to maximize ecological benefits. Coordinating with conservation partners allows the County to address biodiversity, watershed health, and ecosystem services at the broader landscape scale while creating a shared foundation with other stakeholders for setting priorities, tracking outcomes, and directing resources to the most impactful restoration projects.

» **5.4.1** Support the formation of a Regional Conservation Partnership Network to align priorities and share updates.

» **5.4.2** Work with Regional Conservation Partnership Network members to integrate results of the baseline assessment into land use planning and restoration priorities. Jointly apply for grants and other funding sources to implement restoration priorities.

» **5.4.3** Develop an ecological assessment baseline of all parks and trails to characterize the current state of ecological health including the vegetative community, streams, and wetlands and identify restoration priorities.

**REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP**

Establishing a **Regional Conservation Partnership Network** would bring together natural resource conservation entities across the region in a coordinated, collaborative forum. This network could convene quarterly to share data, align priorities, and comprehensively address biodiversity protection and ecosystem service enhancement across public and private parks, as well as lands under conservation easement. By working collectively, partners can identify shared restoration needs and streamline implementation strategies. In addition, the network would serve as a platform for jointly pursuing grants and other funding opportunities, enabling larger-scale, more impactful restoration projects that benefit the entire region.

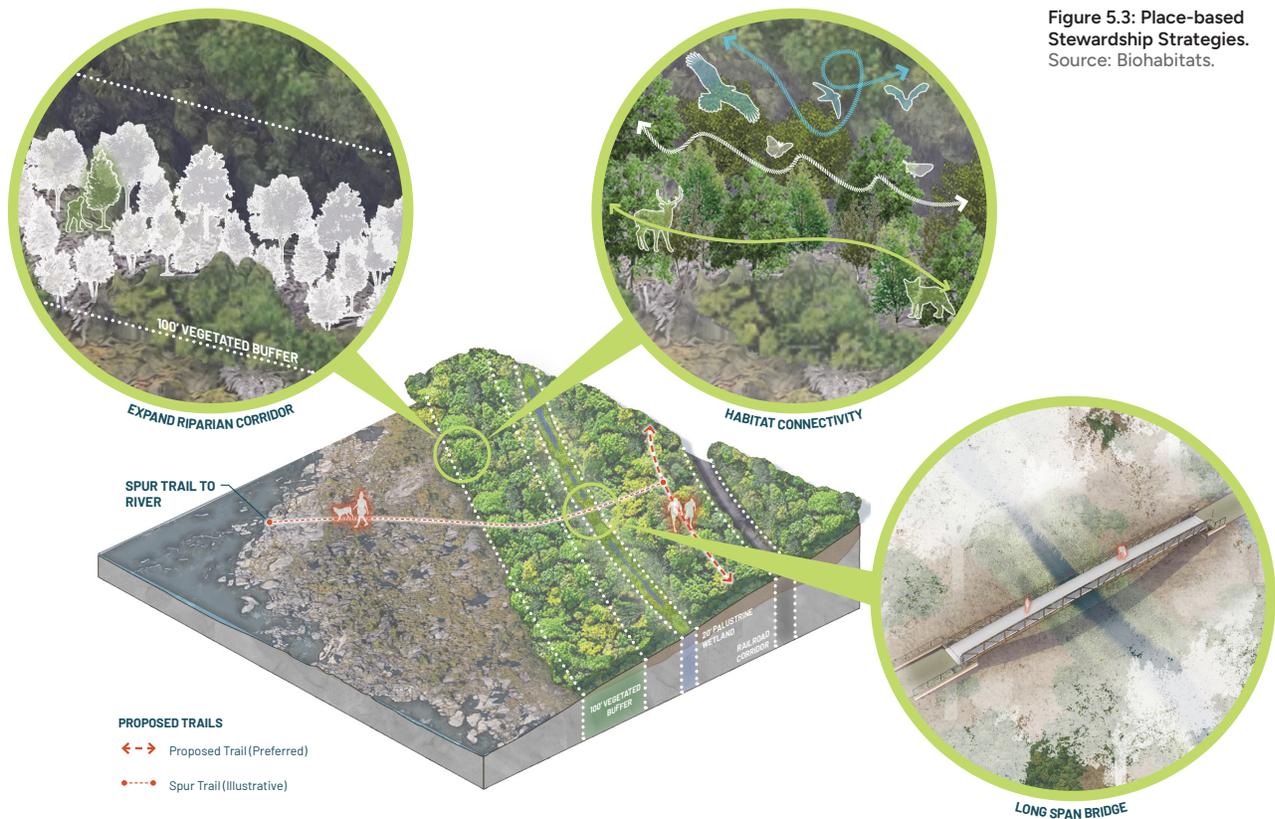


Figure 5.3: Place-based Stewardship Strategies. Source: Biohabitats.

# INVESTMENT



## Invest in existing and proposed parks and trails, advocating for permanent protection.

### 6.1 Identify improvements to existing parks and trails based on community input.

Community priorities can help guide reinvestment in existing parks and trails where improvements can most enhance user experience and safety. Translating public input into clear improvements strengthens accountability and helps direct resources toward the upgrades residents value most. This approach also reinforces stewardship of the County's historic and cultural resources by ensuring that preservation and interpretation are considered as part of ongoing park and trail planning and reinvestment.

» **6.1.1** Complete individual master plans for County parks and include detailed studies, such as condition and capacity assessments and revised maintenance protocols.

» **6.1.2** Integrate historic resources preservation and interpretation into park and trail plans.

### 6.2 Work to permanently protect all trails, including Conestoga Trail and Horse-Shoe Trail that lack permanent easements.

Permanent protection of trail corridors enhances the regional trail network. This allows for long-term public access and strengthens the County's ability to advance future connections through coordinated easement and corridor protection strategies.

» **6.2.1** Develop detailed design and development plans for trails needing permanent protection.

» **6.2.2** Use trail easements to permanently protect trails or connect to priority parcels (See Action 1.3.1). Ideally work with municipalities or trail authority (see Policy 7.1) to hold easements.

### 6.3 Develop and install a unified system of wayfinding, signage, and site furnishings for County parks and trails to establish continuity and a sense of identity.

A unified wayfinding strategy creates a consistent, countywide identity, helping residents and visitors easily recognize parks and trails that are part of the Lancaster County system.

» **6.3.1** Identify funds for signage, wayfinding, and site furnishings such as benches, lighting, and trash cans, as applicable.

### 6.4 Engage and assist state, local, and non-profit outdoor recreation providers in expanding parks, trails, and open space opportunities.

The County should focus on strengthening partnerships with state agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit providers to expand the overall supply of parks, trails, and open space beyond County-owned assets. By doing so, the County can increase access, address network gaps, and improve the visitor experience across a broader range of recreation destinations. Support for shared-use amenities can also ensure that user needs are addressed consistently across ownerships.

» **6.4.1** Identify financial support for open space amenities such as parking lots, bathrooms, water access and paddling launches, and signage for other parks and open space landowners such as the Lancaster Conservancy, and the Conestoga Canoe Club. (See 7.4.2)



Breezyview Overlook in Chickies County Park. Source: OLIN.



Northwest River Trail Signage. Source: OLIN.

## 6.5 Support the expansion of water-based outdoor recreation opportunities wherever possible.

Water-based recreation is an integral part of the parks and trails system, serving as both recreational destinations and connective corridors. Enhancing the water trail experience and access opportunities supports water-based recreation like paddling and fishing. Coordinated planning with key partners will help identify and advance new access locations that improve safety, convenience, and equitable access to the County's waterways.

- » **6.5.1** Highlight the importance of water trails for County connectivity and recreation.
- » **6.5.2** Work with municipalities and other partners to develop new water access points along waterways in existing parks and other publicly accessible lands.

## PROTECTING TRAILS

While “complete,” the Horse-Shoe and Conestoga Trails lack permanent protection. Continuing to advocate for the permanent protection of trails through easements is important to the long-term completion of Lancaster County's trail network.

### Conestoga Trail

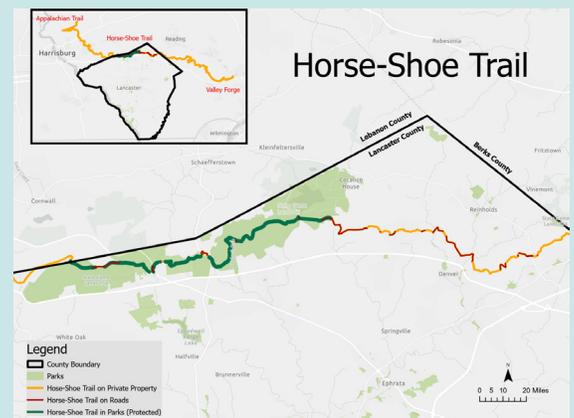
The Conestoga Trail is a 65 mile trail entirely in Lancaster County. 56% of trail is on-road (35 miles); 33% of trail is protected on preserved open spaces (21 miles)



Source: Lancaster County.

### Horse-Shoe Trail

The Horse-Shoe Trail is a 140 mile trail crossing multiple counties. 18% of trail is located in Lancaster County (25.5 miles); 31% of trail (8 miles) is on-road; 41% of the trail is protected on preserved open spaces (10.5 miles)



Source: Lancaster County.

# ADVOCACY



## Enhance management of parks and trails by local communities and organizations to support and increase recreational opportunities.

### 7.1 Establish a strategy for improving coordinated and collaborative management of trails in Lancaster County.

A countywide coordination framework and collaborative management structure will help partners align priorities for developing a cohesive park and trail system. This can also help the County and relevant partners respond more effectively to emerging needs and community priorities, particularly where trails cross municipal boundaries and involve multiple stakeholders, owners, and managers.

- » **7.1.1** Appoint a county-wide trails advisory board or group, following detailed coordination with municipalities, nonprofits and advocacy organizations to assess trail management needs.
- » **7.1.2** Consider creating a trails coordinator position within the county to work with trail owners and managers throughout the county, with appropriate funding to support.
- » **7.1.3** Encourage municipalities to form trail advisory committees that will work to prioritize neighborhood connections to larger trail networks.
- » **7.1.4** Convene parks, trails, outdoor recreation and open space providers on a regular basis to understand and update community priorities.

### 7.2 Develop/implement a funding and revenue strategy that leverages county investment in the management and coordination of parks and trails.

A sustainable funding and revenue strategy will allow the County to support long-term trail and park coordination, operations, and stewardship. This requires the County to identify different funding sources/programs and leverage grant opportunities in order to support the capacity needed to deliver consistent maintenance, management, and implementation across the network.

- » **7.2.1** Pursue state funding, such as DCNR's Circuit Rider Program, to strengthen coordination of parks and trails, such as hiring a trails coordination position and other operational support.
- » **7.2.2** Evaluate feasibility of dedicated funding sources such as real estate transfer tax or TIF (Tax Increment Financing).
- » **7.2.3** Evaluate the feasibility of revenue sources such as land leases, permit fees, etc. that provide revenue to offset cost of the trails coordinator position.
- » **7.2.4** Leverage funding to support investment in existing parks and trails (see 6.4.1).

### 7.3 Leverage resources to provide more support for communities and organizations in Lancaster County on parks and trails.

Funding for new park and trail acquisitions and management is a consistent concern among Lancaster County parks, trails and open space managers. Resources for communities and organizations to preserve more open space and provide more recreational assets and organizational support is critical to the long-term viability of these resources.

- » **7.3.1** Consider establishing a Lancaster County Grant Fund for park and trail projects.
- » **7.3.2** Pursue the creation of advocacy or "friends" groups for parks and trails.
- » **7.3.3** Pursue collaborative grant opportunities with other local communities and community partners.
- » **7.3.4** Host grant-writing and park management workshops and maintain a resource library for organizations to access.

## 7.4 Explore alternative land acquisition and access strategies to expand opportunities.

Alternative approaches for land acquisition can open up new trail connections, expand parkland opportunities, and protect priority landscapes. These approaches can complement traditional fee-simple acquisitions.

- » **7.4.1** Discuss potential park and open space land swaps with outdoor recreation providers.
- » **7.4.2** Work with partner organizations to coordinate strategies.
- » **7.4.3** Use conservation easements combined with trail easements to increase outdoor recreation opportunities without having to purchase the land.

## 7.5 Encourage municipalities to increase recreation land and open space revenue generating mechanisms to support increased funding for parks and open space acquisitions.

Establishing revenue funding mechanisms increases municipal capacity to pursue acquisitions when opportunities arise. This also allows municipalities to match grants and deliver projects that keep pace with growth and community needs.

- » **7.5.1** Encourage municipalities to explore the use of an Earned Income Tax as a way to raise funds for park and trail acquisition. (see Action 2.3.5)



Ribbon cutting for Chiques Creek Bridge along the Northwest River Trail. Source: Lancaster County.



Ribbon cutting for the WERT in Ephrata. Source: Lancaster County.

# 06

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Conestoga Greenway. Source: OLIN.

# PLANNING & FOCUS AREAS

**A key portion of the Parks and Trails Master Plan translates system-wide analysis, community priorities, and level-of-service needs into a set of proposed park and trail focus areas across the county. The chapter outlines strategic opportunities for targeted parkland acquisition, trail connections, and phased implementation that respond to growth patterns, natural resource opportunities and constraints, and community needs.**

# PLANNING AREAS

To illustrate how the proposed countywide parks and trails system connect communities at a local level, each of the proposed trails and parks are shown by planning area. The planning areas are the unit of analysis used to determine parkland level-of-service needs (see Figure 3.2). Each region shows the number of parkland acres it needs by 2040 to maintain a standard of 5 acres per 1,000 residents.

## NORTHWEST PLANNING AREA



Figure 6.1. Existing parks, land use, trails, and proposed trails in Northwest. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Challenges

- The County owns 426 acres of parkland in the Northwest, comprising Chickies Rock County Park and a portion of Speedwell Forge County Park. The current county parkland level of service in the Northwest Planning Area is 4.75, which is less than the 5 acres per 1,000 residents goal, but the highest of any planning area in the county.
- With projected population growth, 64 acres of parkland will be needed by 2040 to meet level of service goals. (See Figure 3.2)
- There are few opportunities to develop a new county park in the Northwest Planning Area, because only one forested parcel over 100 acres in size—without structures and entirely within Lancaster County—still exists. (See Figure 3.7)
- There are no opportunities to expand Speedwell Forge County Park in the Northwest Planning Area due to the park being surrounded by preserved farmland and rural residential development.
- There is a significant amount of preserved farmland in the Northwest Planning Area. Because most conservation easement on preserved farms prohibit recreation trails, trail development in the planning area is extremely challenging. This forces trail connections in the region to be located on local roads. (See Figure 3.6)

**See Chapter 7 for Implementation Opportunities**

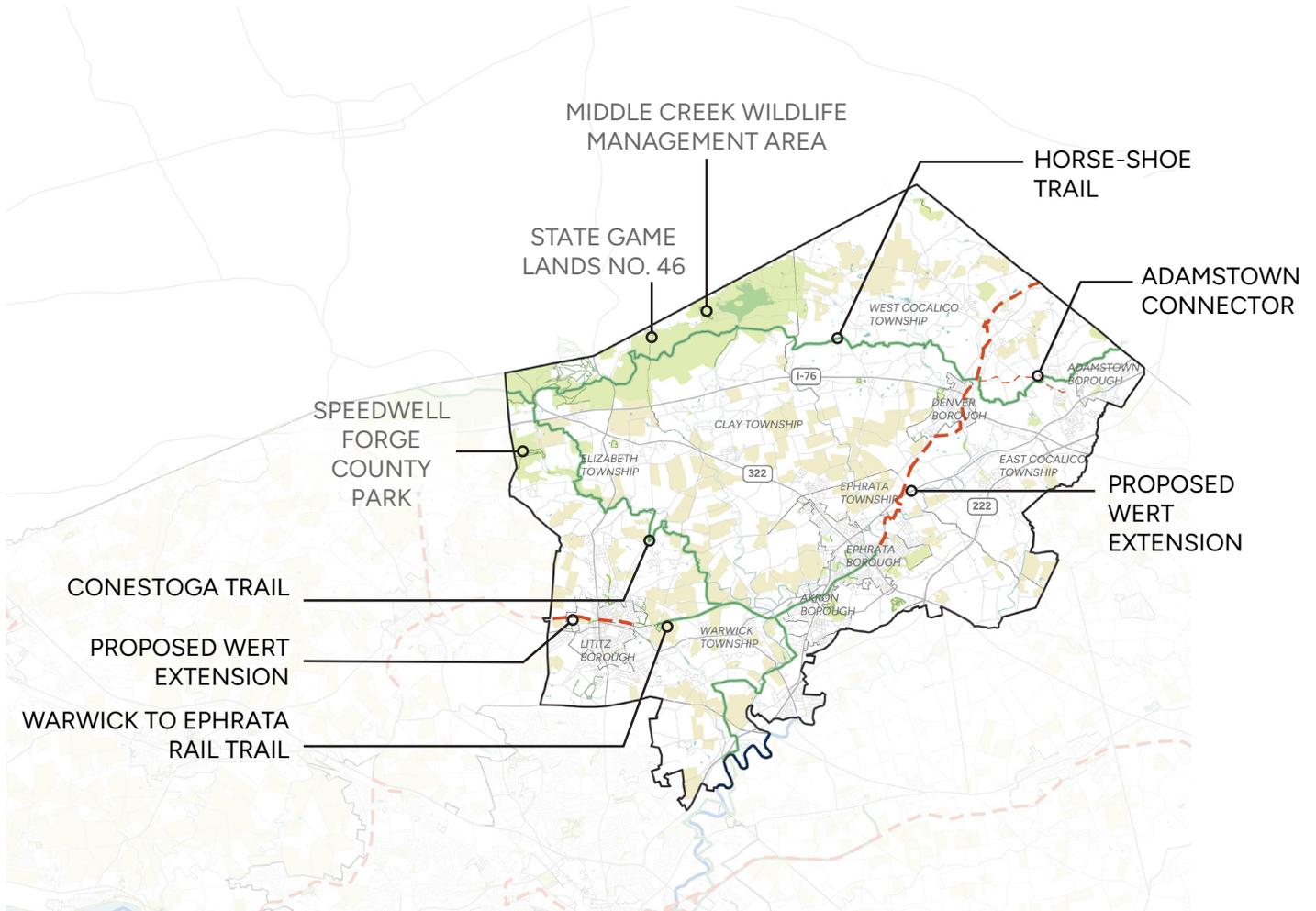


Conoy Wetlands Hike.. Source: Lancaster Conservancy (Credit: Michelle Johnsen)



Marietta Riverfront Trail. Source: Lancaster County.

# NORTHEAST PLANNING AREA



**190** Parkland acres needed by 2040

- Parks/Open Space
  - Water
  - Preserved Farmland
  - Municipal Boundary
  - Major Road
- EXISTING TRAILS**
- Trail
  - Water Trail
- PROPOSED TRAILS**
- Proposed Trail (Preferred)
  - Proposed Trail (Alternate Route)

Figure 6.2. Existing parks, land use, trails, and proposed trails in Northeast. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Challenges

- The County owns 333 acres of parkland in the Northeast, which includes a portion of Speedwell Forge County Park. The current county parkland level of service in the Northeast Planning Area is 3.41, which is less than the 5 acres per 1,000 residents goal.
- With projected population growth, 190 acres of parkland will be needed by 2040 to meet level of service goals. (See Figure 3.2)
- Speedwell Forge County Park has very limited opportunities to expand due to surrounding preserved farmland and scattered rural residential development.
- There are few opportunities to expand State Game Lands No. 46 and Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.
- Both the Horse-Shoe Trail and the Conestoga Trail are important outdoor recreation resources in the planning area, yet they remain largely unprotected. Significant portions of the trail have been forced onto local roads as new unsupportive landowners or new development occurs.
- There are no forested parcels without structures on them in the Northeast Planning Area that are 100 acres or greater in size that are entirely in Lancaster County. (See Figure 3.7)
- A 2024 feasibility study to extend the Warwick to Ephrata Rail Trail from Ephrata Borough to Denver Borough indicated that a Rail-With-Trail was not physically possible along the active railroad line.



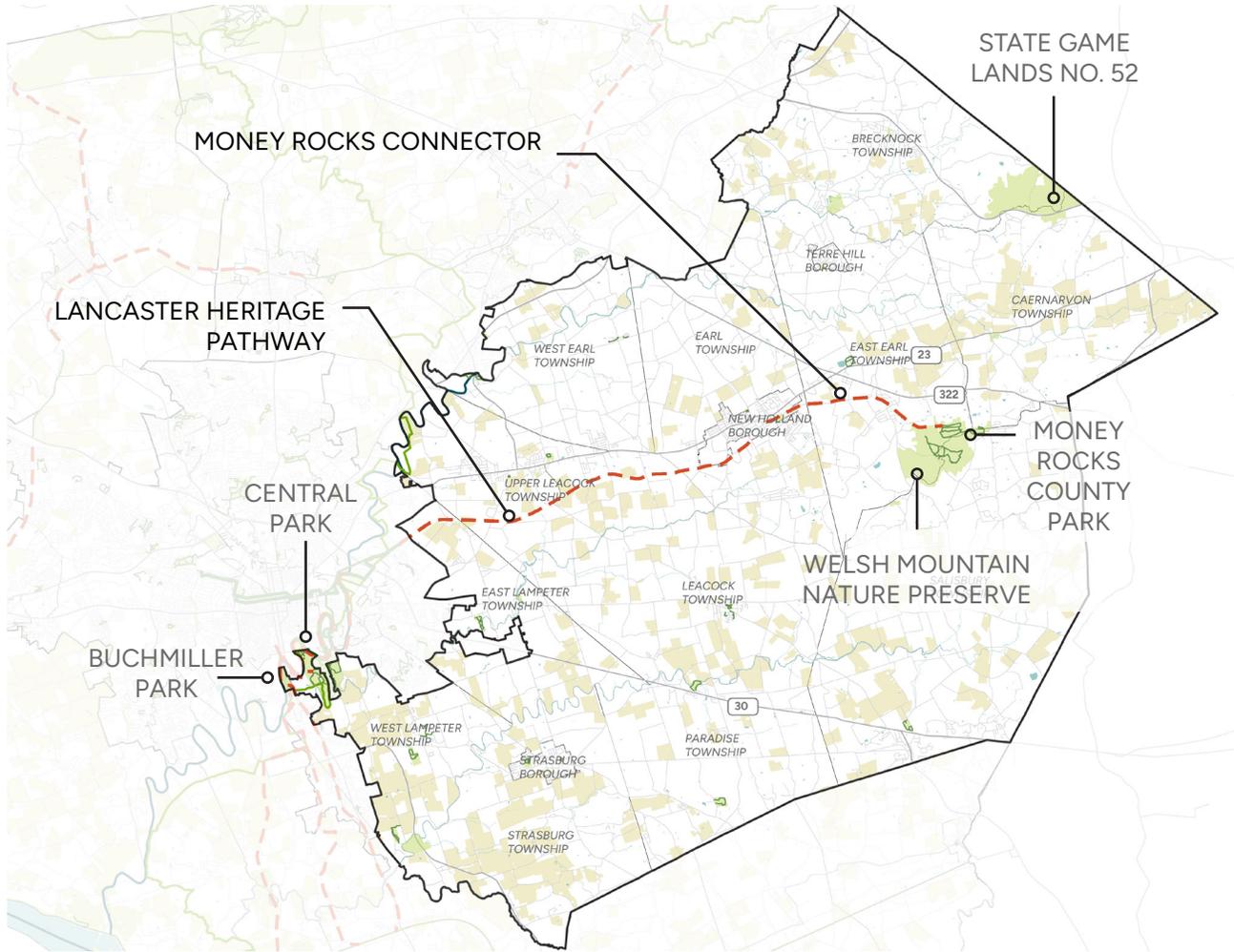
Speedwell Forge County Park. Source: OLIN.



Warwick to Ephrata Rail Trail. Source: Trail Link.

**See Chapter 7 for Implementation Opportunities**

# EAST PLANNING AREA



**82** Parkland acres needed by 2040



Figure 6.3. Existing parks, land use, trails, and proposed trails in East. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Challenges

- The County owns 391 acres of parkland in the East Planning Area, which includes the entirety of Money Rocks County Park. The current county parkland level of service in the East Planning Area is 4.21, which is less than the 5 acres per 1,000 residents goal.
- With projected population growth, 82 acres of parkland will be needed by 2040 to meet level of service goals. (See Figure 3.3)
- The East Planning Area landscape is dominated by agriculture and has a low percentage of forestland.
- Money Rocks County Park and the Welsh Mountain Nature Preserve have limited opportunities for expansion due to adjacent agricultural lands and scattered rural residential development.
- PA State Game Lands No. 52 has little opportunity for expansion in Lancaster County due to the proximity of the PA Turnpike, scattered rural residential development, and other land uses incompatible with conservation.
- There are no forested parcels without structures in the East Planning Area that are 100 acres or greater in size. (See Figure 3.7)
- Intrusions on the abandoned railroad corridor northeast of Money Rock County Park will make it challenging to develop as a shared use trail.
- Central and Buchmiller parks have very limited opportunities to expand in the future.
- The Engleside intersection will be challenging to navigate in order to connect the Conestoga Greenway to the abandoned railroad corridor north of Buchmiller Park.

**See Chapter 7 for Implementation Opportunities**

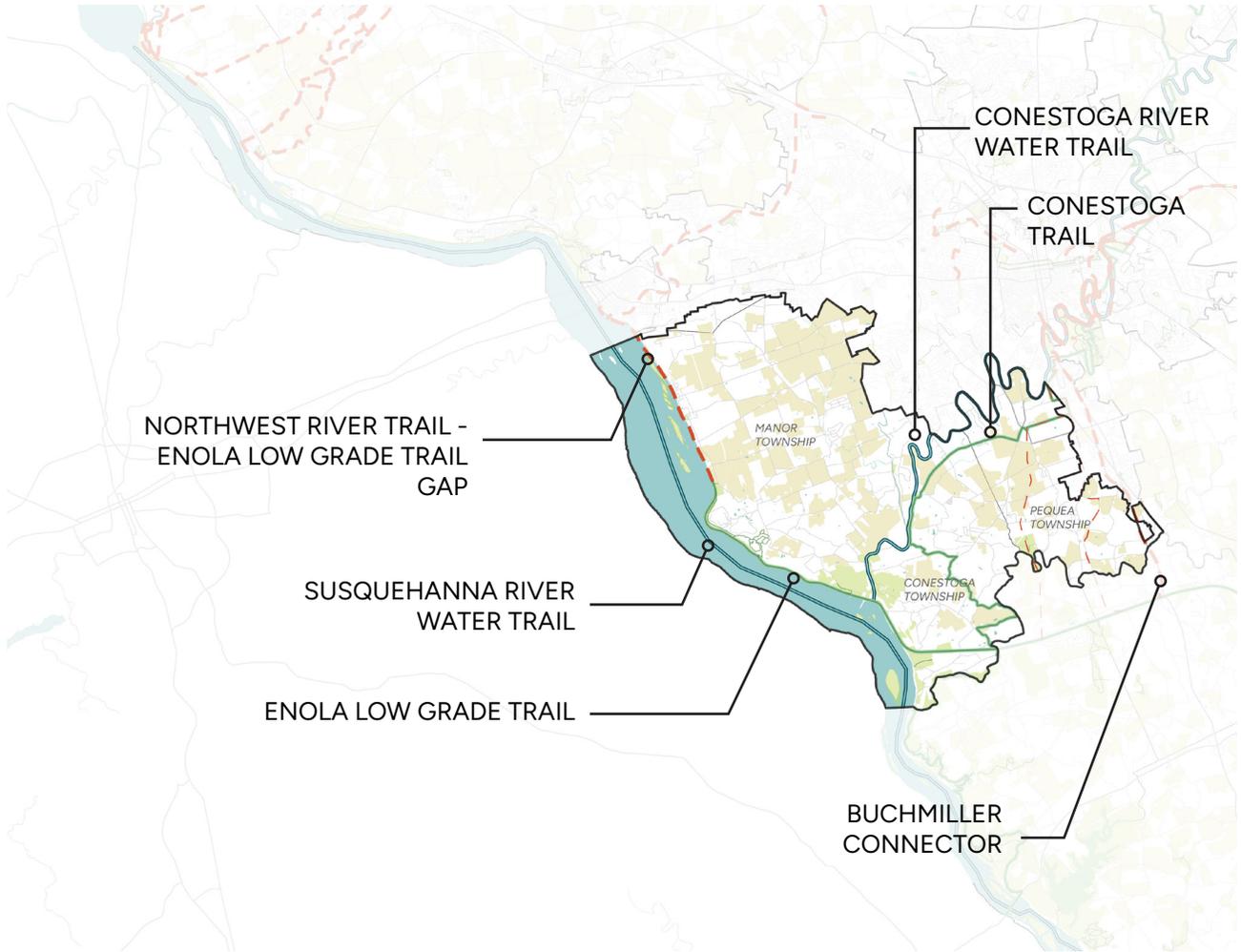


Money Rocks County Park. Source: Lancaster County.



Goat Path. Source: Lancaster County.

# WEST PLANNING AREA



**89** Parkland acres needed by 2040



Figure 6.4. Existing parks, land use, trails, and proposed trails in West. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Challenges

- There are no County-owned parks in the West Planning Area, resulting in a county parkland level of service of zero, which is less than the 5 acres per 1,000 residents goal.
- The population is not projected to grow in the West Planning Area, but 89 acres of parkland will be needed by 2040 to meet level of service goals with the current population. (See Figure 3.2)
- There are no forested parcels without structures greater than 100 acres the planning area. (See Figure 3.7)
- Norfolk Southern owns the majority of land along the Rt. 441 corridor between the Northwest River Trail and the Enola Low Grade Trail.
- Conestoga Trail is almost entirely located on-road north of the Enola Low Grade. A small section of the trail existing on private property and is vulnerable to relocation.
- There are no primitive campsites in the planning area for Susquehanna River or the Conestoga River Water Trails.

**See Chapter 7 for Implementation Opportunities**

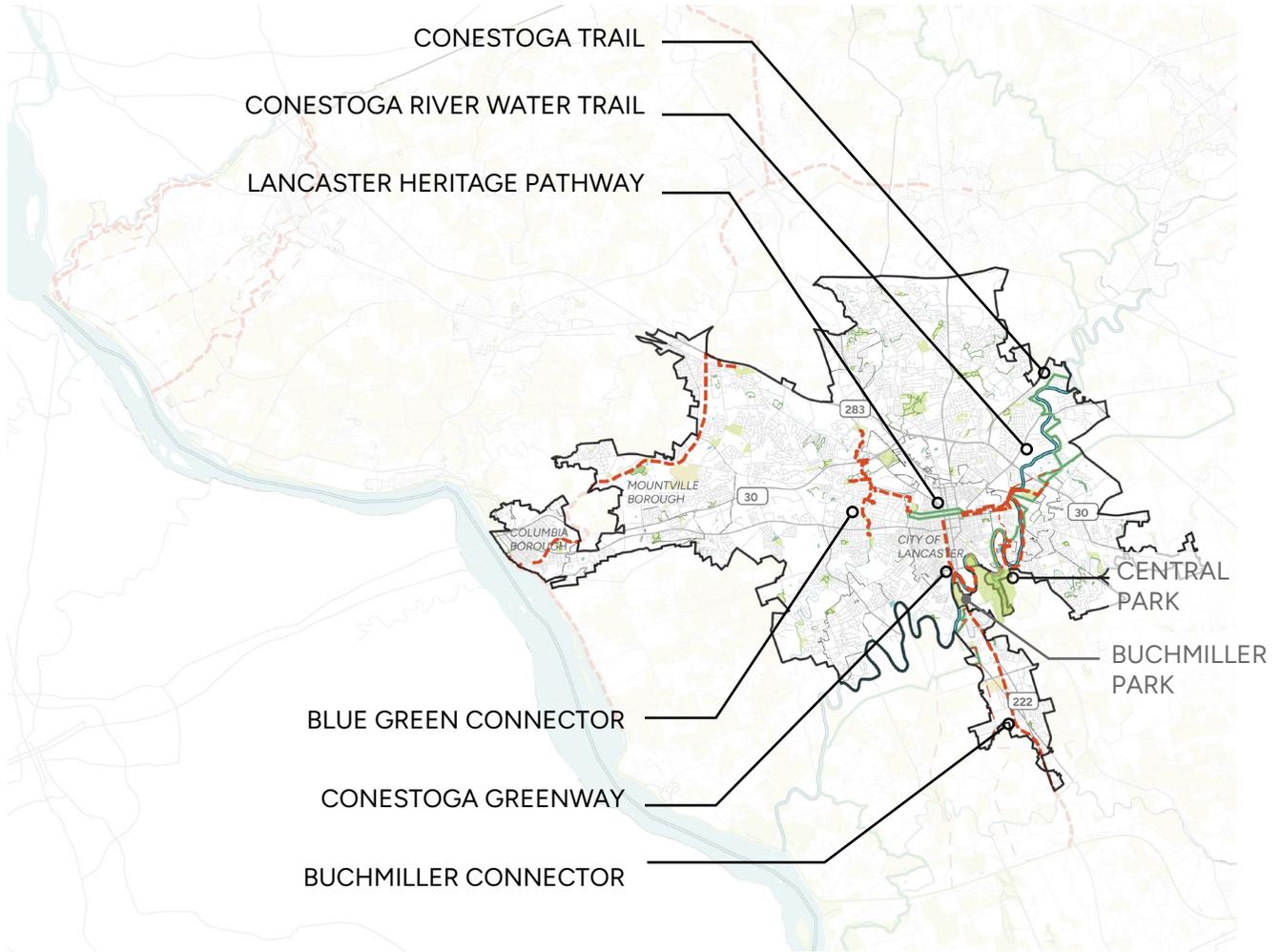


Enola Low Grade Trail. Source: OLIN.



Norfolk Southern Ownership. Source: OLIN.

# METRO PLANNING AREA



**482** Parkland acres needed by 2040



Figure 6.5. Existing parks, land use, trails, and proposed trails in Metro. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Challenges

- The County owns 623 acres of parkland in the Metro Planning Area, which includes Central Park and Buchmiller County Parks. The current county parkland level of service in the Metro Planning Area is 3.08, which is less than the 5 acres per 1,000 residents goal.
- With projected population growth, 481 acres of parkland will be needed by 2040 to meet level of service goals. (See Figure 3.2)
- The Metro Planning Area landscape is dominated by urban and suburban development and gray infrastructure.
- Municipal boundaries are highly fragmented, particularly around the City of Lancaster.
- The Metro Planning Area has the highest parkland acreage deficit of all the planning areas, and it will be difficult to eliminate or reduce it.
- Central and Buchmiller, which are not centrally located, are the only two parks within the Metro Planning Area.
- Central and Buchmiller County Parks have very little opportunity for expansion.
- There are no forested parcels without structures greater than 100 acres in the planning area. (See Figure 3.7)
- Segments of the Conestoga Trail in this planning area are off-road on public and private property, while other segments are on-road.
- Much of the abandoned Reading & Columbia Rail Line and Lancaster and Quarryville Railroad Line have been lost to adjacent parcels.
- Connecting the planned Conestoga Greenway on the proposed Correctional Facility peninsula to Central Park may require the construction of a bike/ped bridge over the Conestoga River due to rock outcroppings southeast of the Greenwood Cemetery.



Conestoga River in Metro Planning Area. Source: OLIN.

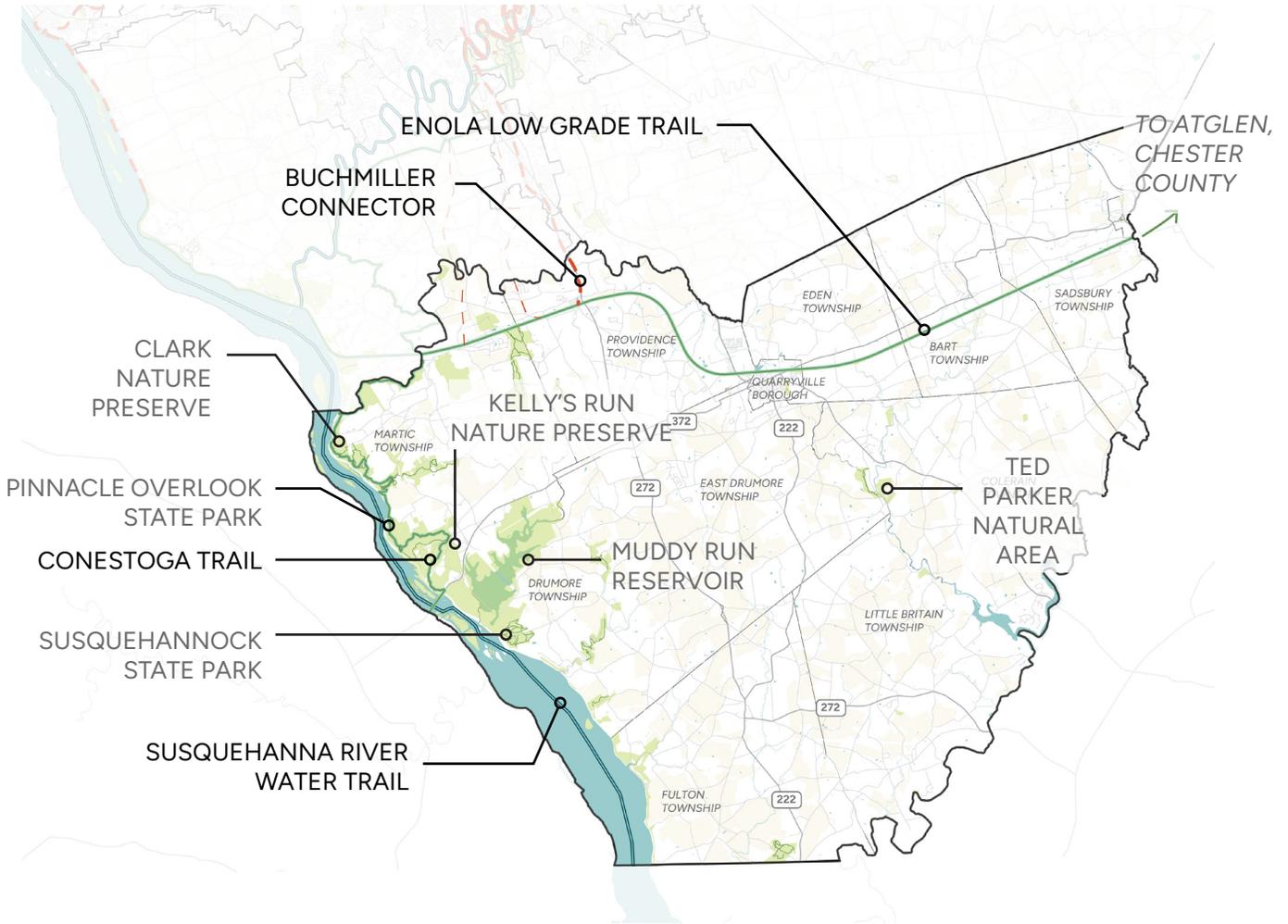


Central Park. Source: OLIN.

- The Engleside intersection will be challenging to navigate in order to connect the Conestoga Greenway to the abandoned railroad corridor north of Buchmiller Park.

**See Chapter 7 for Implementation Opportunities**

# SOUTH PLANNING AREA



**86** Parkland acres needed by 2040



Figure 6.6. Existing parks, land use, trails, and proposed trails in South. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Challenges

- The County owns 134 acres of parkland in the South Planning Area, which includes the entirety of Ted Parker Natural Area. The current county parkland level of service in the South Planning Area is 3.13, which is less than the 5 acres per 1,000 residents goal.
- With projected population growth, 86 acres of parkland will be needed by 2040 to meet level of service goals. (See Figure 3.2)
- Ted Parker County Park has limited opportunities to expand due to topography, which limits accessibility, and scattered rural residential development on adjacent parcels. Although some adjacent parcels have very limited access due to steep slopes, they contain ecologically important habitat for area plant and animal communities.
- The vast majority of publicly accessible outdoor recreation space is located in the northwest part of the planning area and along the Susquehanna River.
- There are no forested parcels without structures in the South Planning Area that are 100 acres or greater in size. (See Figure 3.7)
- Much of the Conestoga Trail south of the Enola Low Grade Trail is protected on preserved land along the corridor, but there are key trail sections on private property that remain vulnerable to relocation.
- The two state parks in the planning area have limited opportunities for expansion.
- There are very limited opportunities to expand PA State Game Lands 136.



Pickerel Frog Shenks Ferry Wildflower Preserve. Source: Lancaster Conservancy (Credit Kerry Givens)



Stewart Run at Ted Parker Natural Area. Source: OLIN.

**See Chapter 7 for Implementation Opportunities**

# PARK FOCUS AREAS

As part of the Lancaster County Parks and Trails Master Plan, analysis of existing conditions, level of service (LOS) needs, and community input helps set system wide priorities for parks, trails, and open space. Chapter 3: Existing Conditions identified disparities in access and deficits in County-owned park acreage across several planning areas, particularly in areas experiencing growth or where natural-resource-based recreation opportunities are limited.

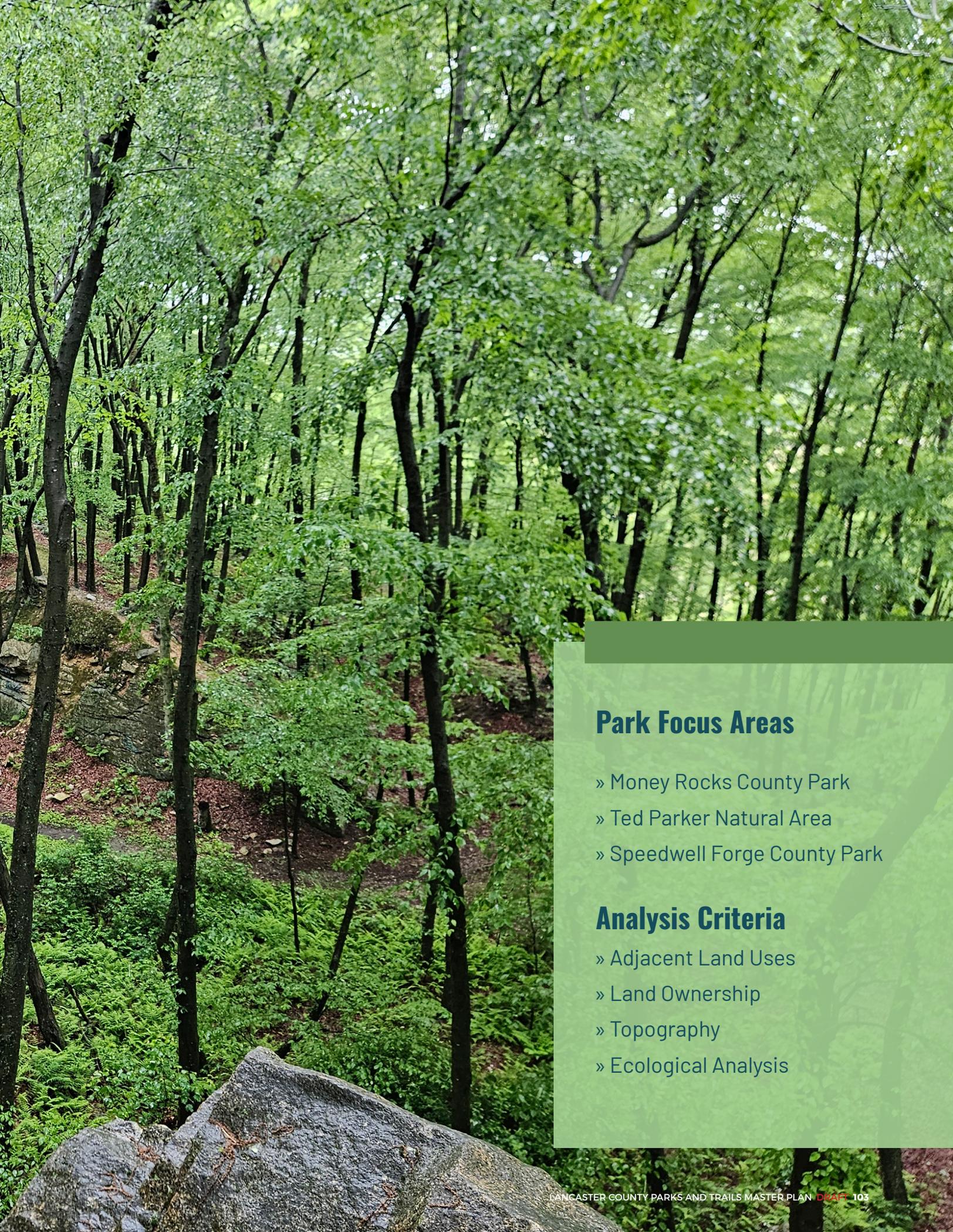
Building on this framework, the plan takes a closer look at three focus County parks: Money Rocks County Park, Speedwell Forge County Park, and the Theodore A. Parker III (Ted) Natural Area, to better understand their specific roles, needs, and opportunities within the overall system.

Money Rocks, Speedwell Forge, and the Ted Parker Natural Area were selected for focused analysis because they play roles in meeting countywide recreation demand and addressing LOS needs while also reflecting priorities raised through the Advisory Committee process.

As primarily natural-resource-based destinations, these parks help fill gaps in passive recreation opportunities, such as hiking, nature observation, and scenic experiences that residents value. They also function as important anchors for the broader parks and trails network beyond municipal systems.

An analysis of existing conditions, parcels and landownership, and adjacent land uses was conducted for each park. Parcels for acquisition consideration were further analyzed by inventorying large parcels over 50 acres immediately adjacent to each park, as well as any understanding whether there had been any prior conversations with private landowners and coordination with the Lancaster County Conservancy.





## **Park Focus Areas**

- » Money Rocks County Park
- » Ted Parker Natural Area
- » Speedwell Forge County Park

## **Analysis Criteria**

- » Adjacent Land Uses
- » Land Ownership
- » Topography
- » Ecological Analysis

# MONEY ROCKS COUNTY PARK



Figure 6.7 Money Rocks County Park surrounding land cover patterns. Source: OLIN.

## Park Analysis

A GIS-based analysis was conducted to evaluate parcels for potential expansion adjacent to Money Rocks County Park. The analysis evaluated parcel size, ownership patterns, road access, land use, and zoning to identify potential opportunities for acquisition or conservation partnerships. Large, contiguous, and undeveloped parcels were prioritized.

Most of the surrounding parcels are residentially zoned, except for one parcel at the northeast corner of the park, but are smaller in size, and more complicated and cumbersome to acquire. A few of the larger parcels with developed structures could be subdivided in the future, provided that they are not protected farmland. The analysis also included reviewing comparable land costs. Since none of the surrounding parcels are currently available/ for sale, costs reviewed were approximate.

Ecological and terrain analysis were used to assess habitat value, forest continuity, and slope constraints (see page 44). Much of the surrounding terrain is steep, rocky, and heavily wooded, presenting challenges for access and development but reinforcing the area's value for conservation and passive recreation such as hiking and nature observation.

## What We Heard: Focus Groups

A focus group was held in the Fall of 2025 to hear detailed input from representatives of local municipalities and landowners. The discussion underscored Money Rocks' role within a larger, interconnected conservation and trail landscape in

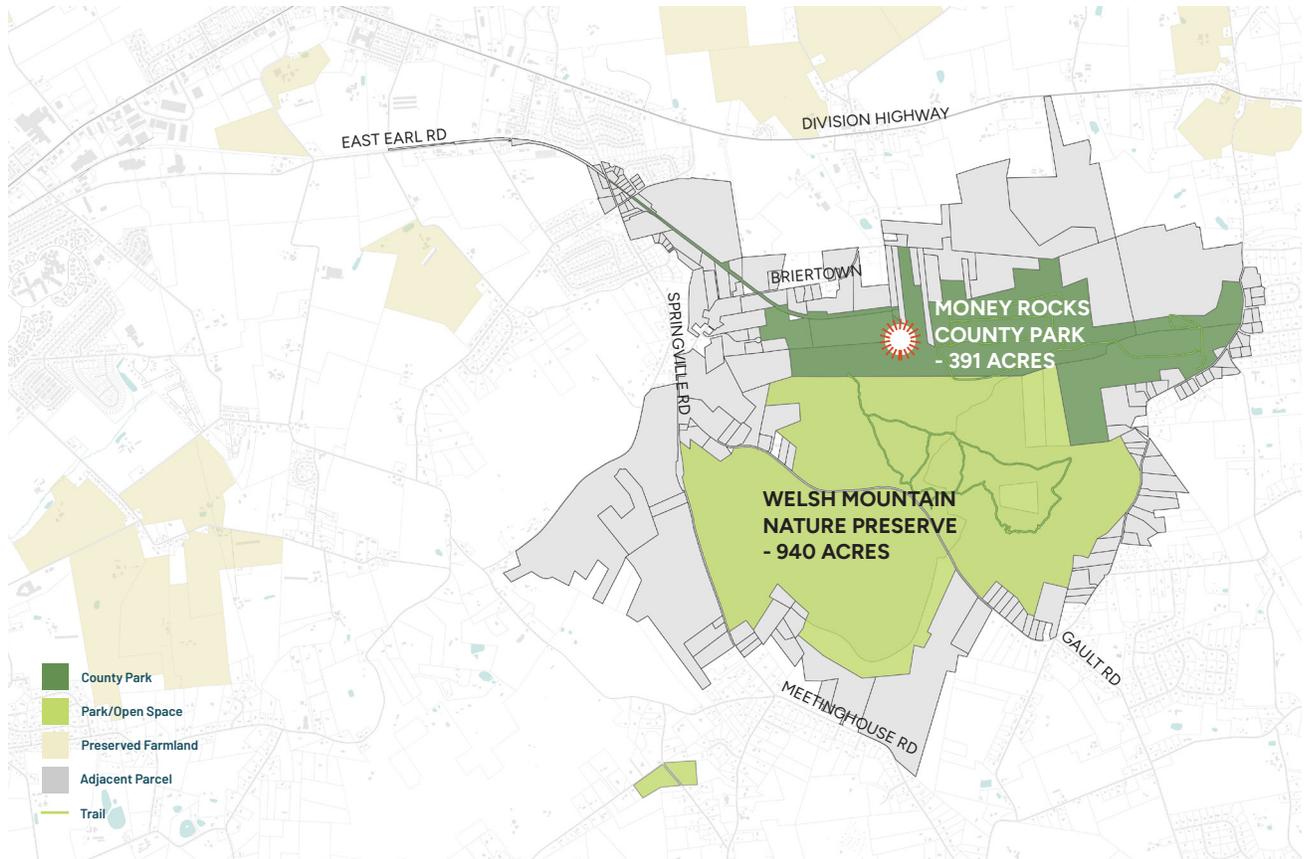


Figure 6.8 Money Rocks County Park adjacent parcels. Source: OLIN.

relation to its connection to Welsh Mountain. Focus group members noted that while the Lancaster Conservancy has previously engaged landowners about potential acquisitions around Money Rocks and Welsh Mountain, no acquisitions were underway.

The group emphasized the importance of consistent regulations, programming, and management across Conservancy and County lands due to the shared trail system linking Welsh Mountain and Money Rocks. Opportunities were also identified to strengthen access and functionality, including connections to the Lancaster Heritage Pathway, and the Briertown rail extension as a potential access and stormwater management corridor, and future acquisition of several adjacent private properties in the event that their current use changes.

## FORESTED LAND

The Welsh Mountains harbor the second-largest continuous forest remaining in Lancaster County. Money Rocks preserves a portion of that forest, which is in various stages of natural plant succession.

# TED PARKER NATURAL AREA



Figure 6.9. Ted Parker Natural Area surrounding land use patterns. Source: OLIN.

## Park Analysis

A GIS-based analysis was conducted to evaluate parcels for potential expansion around Ted Parker. Especially critical at Ted Parker was identifying parcels that could connect the northern and southern portions of the park into a contiguous unit. The analysis focused on identifying large parcels with conservation or expansion potential, prioritizing large parcels, current ownership, zoning and land use, and access. Analysis also included reviewing comparable land costs. Since none of the surrounding parcels are currently available/ for sale, costs reviewed were approximate.

Topographic analysis revealed steep slopes, rocky terrain, and sensitive habitats along the Octoraro Creek corridor. The challenging terrain limits the

feasibility of intensive recreational development or developed trails, but provides a prime opportunity for conservation-focused expansion that protects ecological resources while improving public access.

## What We Heard: Focus Groups

A focus group was held in the Fall of 2025 including local residents. Feedback highlighted the history of the site, its terrain, and other characteristics of surrounding parcels. Participants noted that much of the land is steep, rocky, and difficult to traverse, which helps explain why it has not been developed and suggests it is best suited for hiking and ecological conservation rather than intensive recreation.

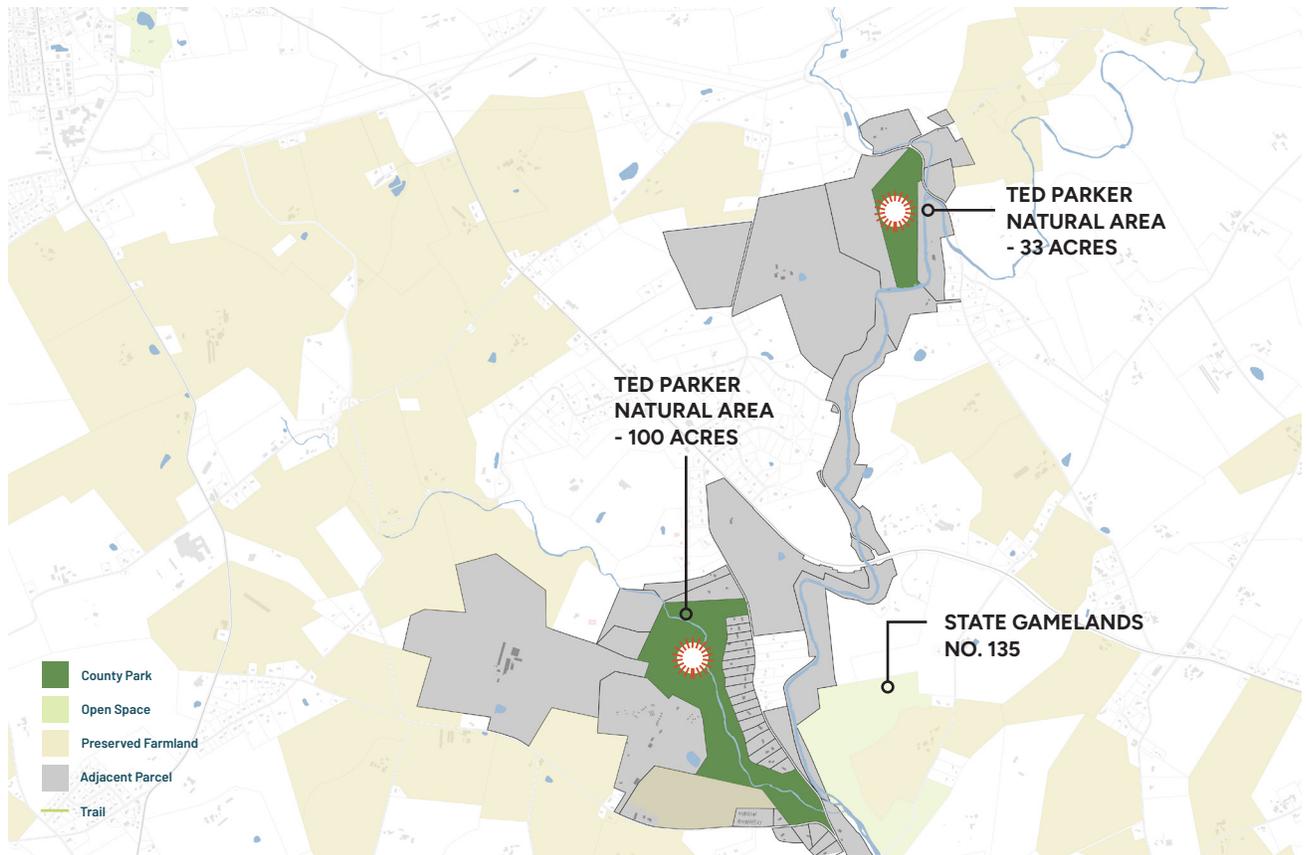


Figure 6.10. Ted Parker adjacent parcels. Source: OLIN.

There was discussion about potentially divesting the northern parcel due to limited connectivity and exploring the use of DCNR funding for acquisition elsewhere in the county or a land swap with the Lancaster Conservancy to secure property that better supports public access. Specific parcel constraints were also identified, including difficult terrain along Octoraro Creek and high acquisition costs for family-owned lands along Kirkwood Pike. There may be a future opportunity to acquire approximately 92 acres of creekside property from the Chester Water Authority. Overall, the discussion emphasized the need for strategic decision-making that balances conservation value, cost, and public accessibility.



Ted Parker Natural Area walking and hiking trails. Source: OLIN.

# SPEEDWELL FORGE

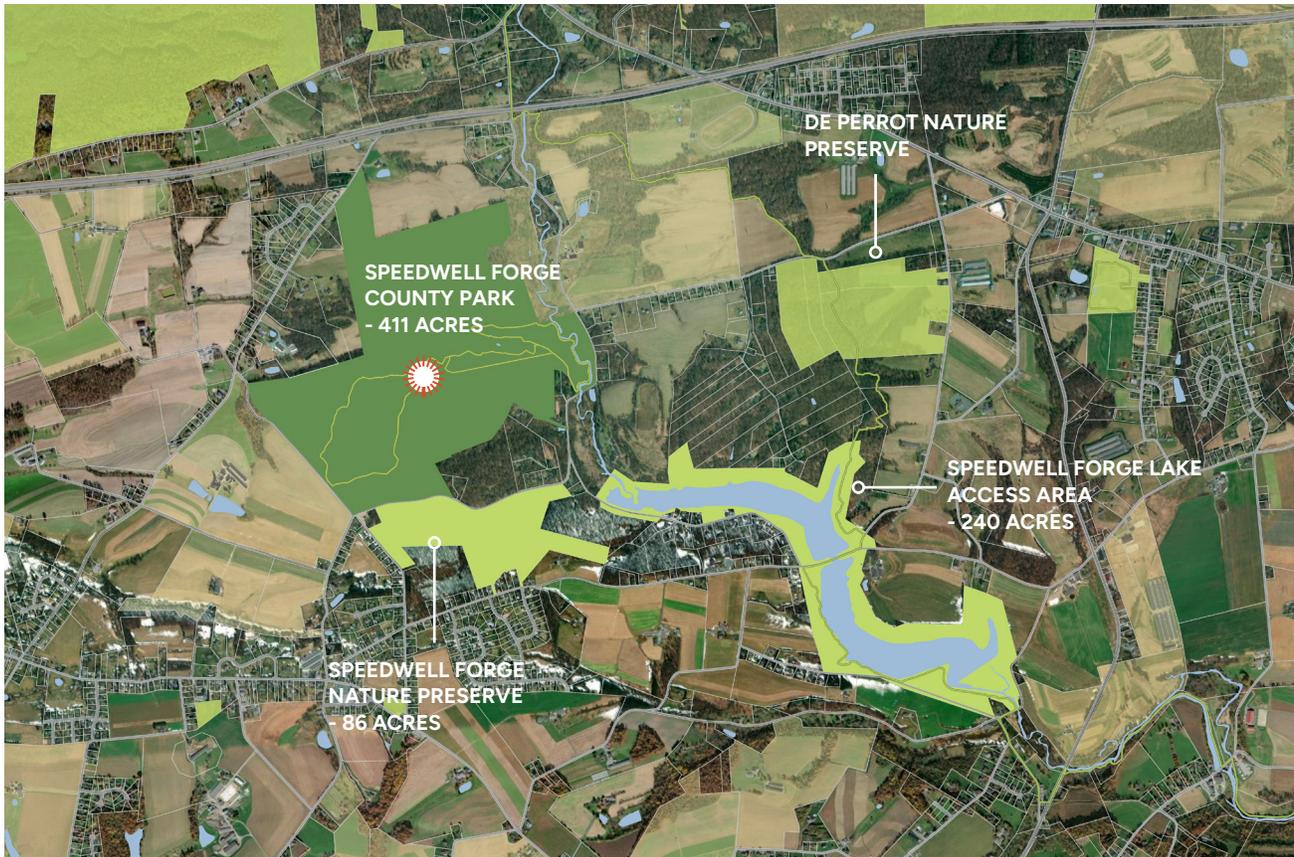


Figure 6.11. Speedwell Forge County Park surrounding land use patterns. Source: OLIN.

## Park Analysis

Parcels surrounding Speedwell Forge County Park were analyzed using GIS to assess possible park expansion or the possibility of trail or conservation easements. The analysis included land use, zoning, parcel size, ownership, and access. Particular attention was given to parcels with potential connectivity to nearby State or Conservancy land, large parcels, and those that could be subdivided in the future, provided that they are not protected farmland. Ecological analysis highlighted the area's high Core Habitat and Climate Change Connectivity opportunities (see page 44). Generally, surrounding parcels are topographically favorable, and well-accessed from the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Analysis

also included reviewing comparable land costs. Since none of the surrounding parcels are currently available/ for sale, costs reviewed were approximate.

## What We Heard: Focus Groups

Speedwell Forge opportunities were discussed with the Advisory Committee in the Summer of 2025. Comments were focused on, understanding the qualities of surrounding parcels, land constraints such as protected farmland, and improving connectivity.

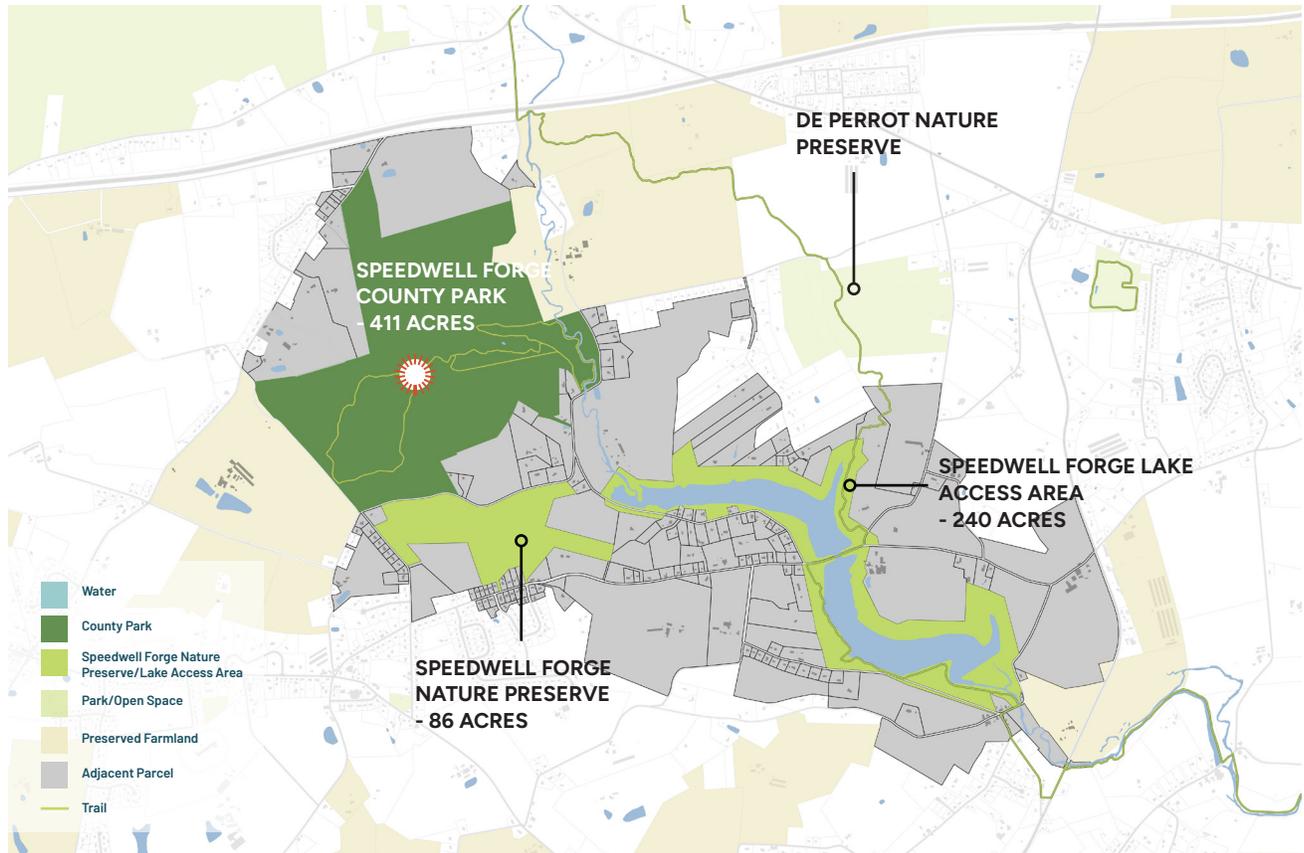


Figure 6.12. Speedwell Forge County Park adjacent parcels. Source: OLIN.

The majority of surrounding parcels are zoned residential, many of which with existing structures, but could be subdivided if the parcels changed ownership or use. Due to the co-location of Conservancy and PA Fish and Boat land, there was strong interest in improving trail connections between these properties. Overall, the discussion highlighted that trail easements and targeted corridor connections, rather than large-scale acquisitions, may offer a more near-term and plausible path forward.

## A LARGER EXPANSE

Adjacent open spaces to Speedwell Forge County Park create a larger expanse of natural areas and park area for visitors. The Speedwell Forge Nature Preserve and De Perrot Nature Preserve are managed by Lancaster Conservancy while the Lake Access Area is managed by PA Fish and Boat Commission.

# TRAIL FOCUS AREAS

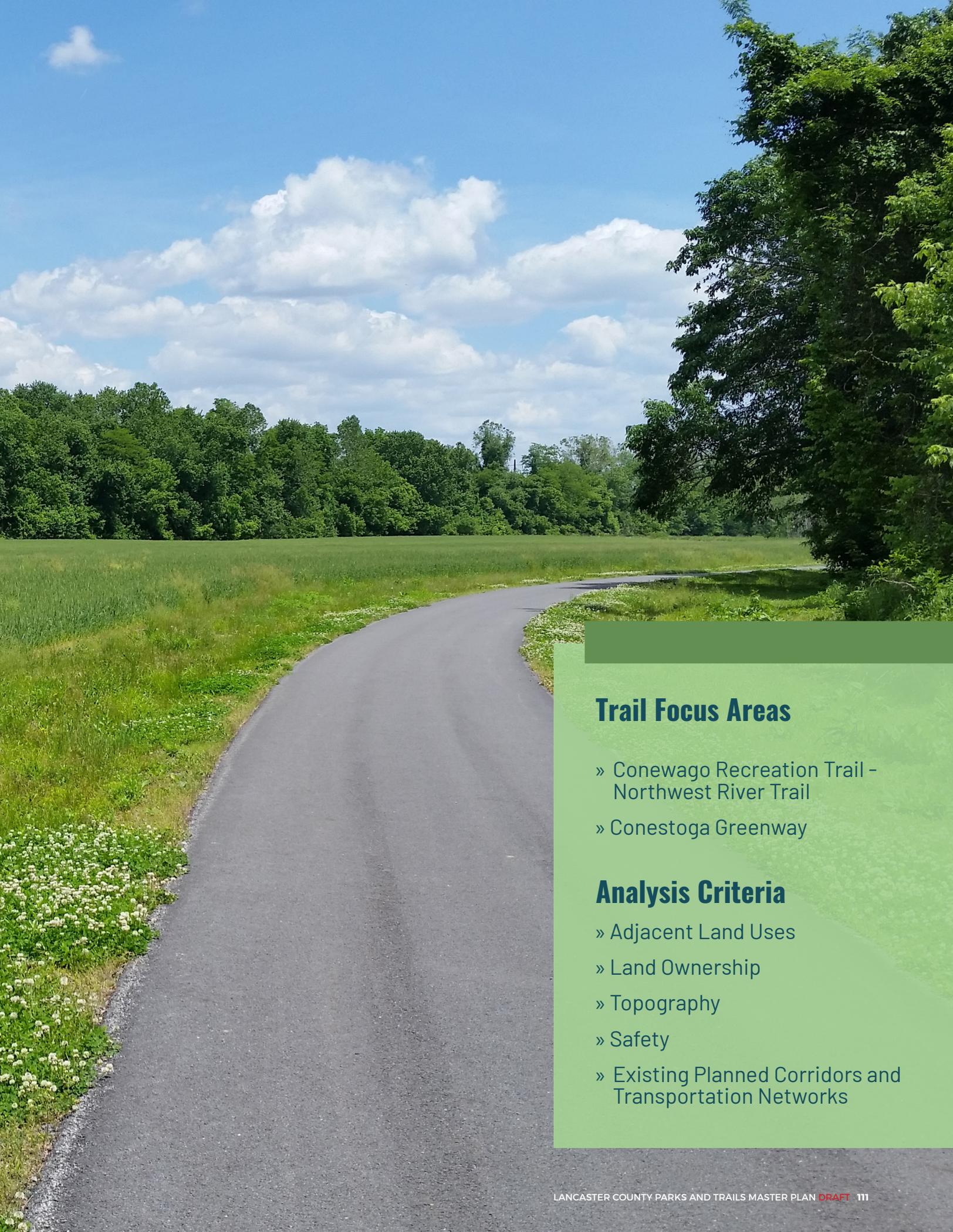
The PTMP also identifies areas for more detailed trail analysis, focusing on prioritizing corridors that align with community needs and expressed priorities, strengthening access in urban centers and high-growth areas, and building directly on existing trail plans to advance projects that are already supported and feasible.

The identified focus gap studies are the Conewago Recreation Trail – Northwest River Trail gap and the Conestoga Greenway. Other major trail gaps, such as the Enola Low Grade Trail to the Northwest River Trail and the Conestoga River corridor, have already been the subject of recent feasibility studies or prior plans, and were therefore not re-examined as part of this plan.

This focused analysis helps prioritize connections that will serve the most people and close the most critical gaps. By concentrating on key areas, the County can begin to align projects with community priorities, coordinate with partner plans, and advance trail alignments that are both implementable and meaningful to residents.

Trail feasibility and impact depend heavily on local conditions, such as safety, topography, land use, and existing planned corridors. Each focus area was analyzed through on-the-ground and mapping-based analysis of topography, natural and scenic features, and adjacent land uses to identify opportunities for partnerships.

Potential conflicts and constraints that could affect long-term implementation were also evaluated. Where possible, the analysis also emphasizes safer alignments by avoiding high-injury networks and high-traffic roadways, while balancing directness with the scenic and experiential qualities that make trails attractive. Lastly, feedback from focus groups fed into the various trail alignments for each trail gap.



## **Trail Focus Areas**

- » Conewago Recreation Trail - Northwest River Trail
- » Conestoga Greenway

## **Analysis Criteria**

- » Adjacent Land Uses
- » Land Ownership
- » Topography
- » Safety
- » Existing Planned Corridors and Transportation Networks

# CONESTOGA GREENWAY

**The Conestoga Greenway represents an opportunity to establish a continuous, river-oriented trail corridor linking Central Park and Buchmiller Park to the larger trail network while strengthening access to the Conestoga River.**

As one of the County's most significant recreational assets, the river corridor has long been identified in local and regional plans as a priority for greenway and trail development. Advancing the Conestoga Greenway would connect existing parks, neighborhoods, and local trail segments, creating a signature east-west spine that enhances recreation, conservation, and mobility.

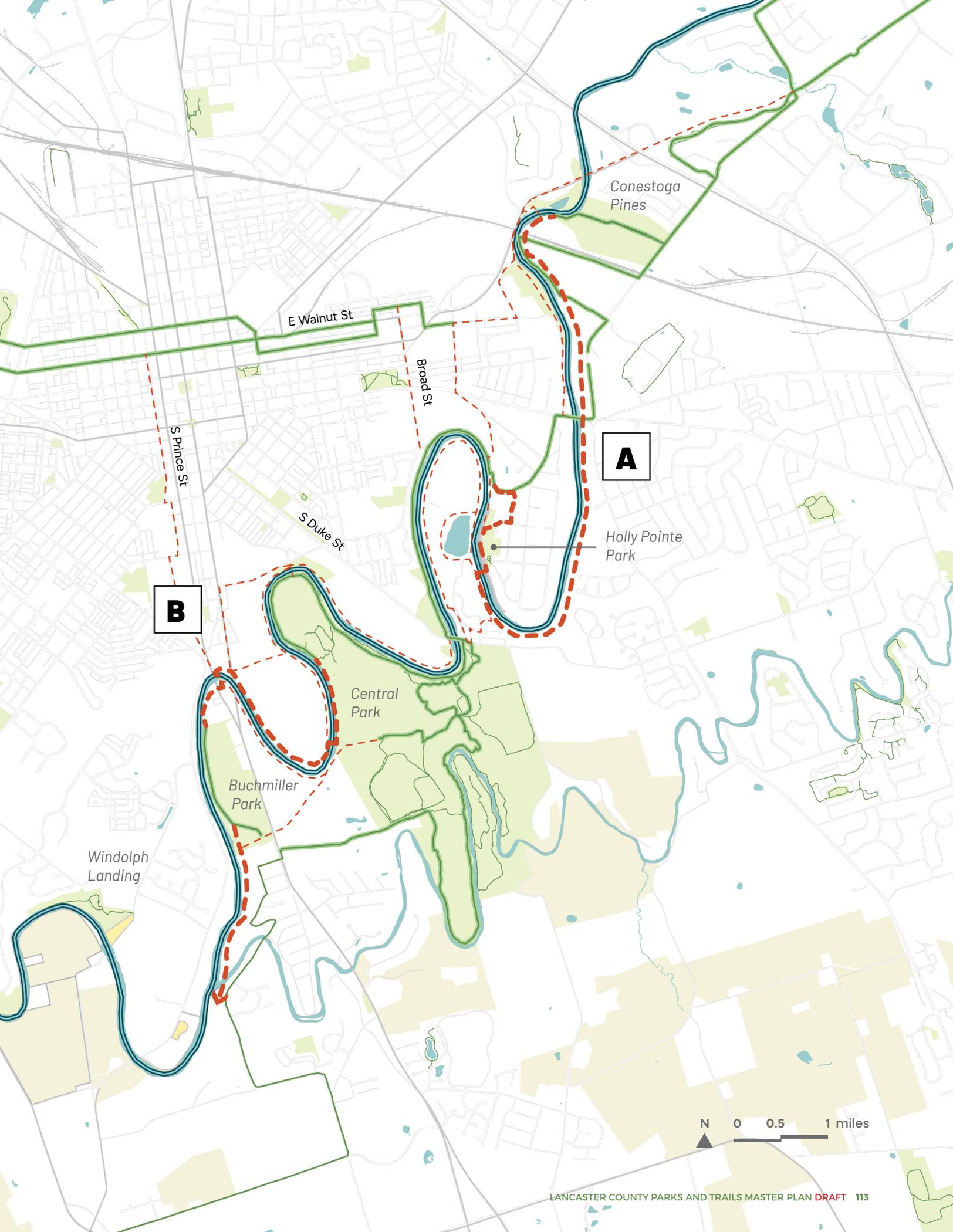
At the same time, the corridor presents notable challenges. These include limited right-of-way availability, fragmented ownership across multiple jurisdictions, steep topographic changes along the river, and reliance on potential future opportunities that may not be available in the near term (such as developments like the Sunnyside Environmental Center).

As a result, implementation is likely to occur incrementally through piecemeal acquisitions, easements, and partnerships over time. This requires a phased approach to implementation, underscoring the importance of long-term coordination with relevant stakeholders. As this trail runs along the river corridor, ecologically sensitive design is also critical to ensure habitat and ecological health, protect water quality, and balance public access to the waterway.

## LEGEND



Figure 6.13. Conestoga Greenway Concept. Source: OLIN.



Conestoga Pines

E Walnut St

Broad St

**A**

Holly Pointe Park

S Duke St

**B**

Central Park

Buchmiller Park

Windolph Landing

N 0 0.5 1 miles

# SECTION A

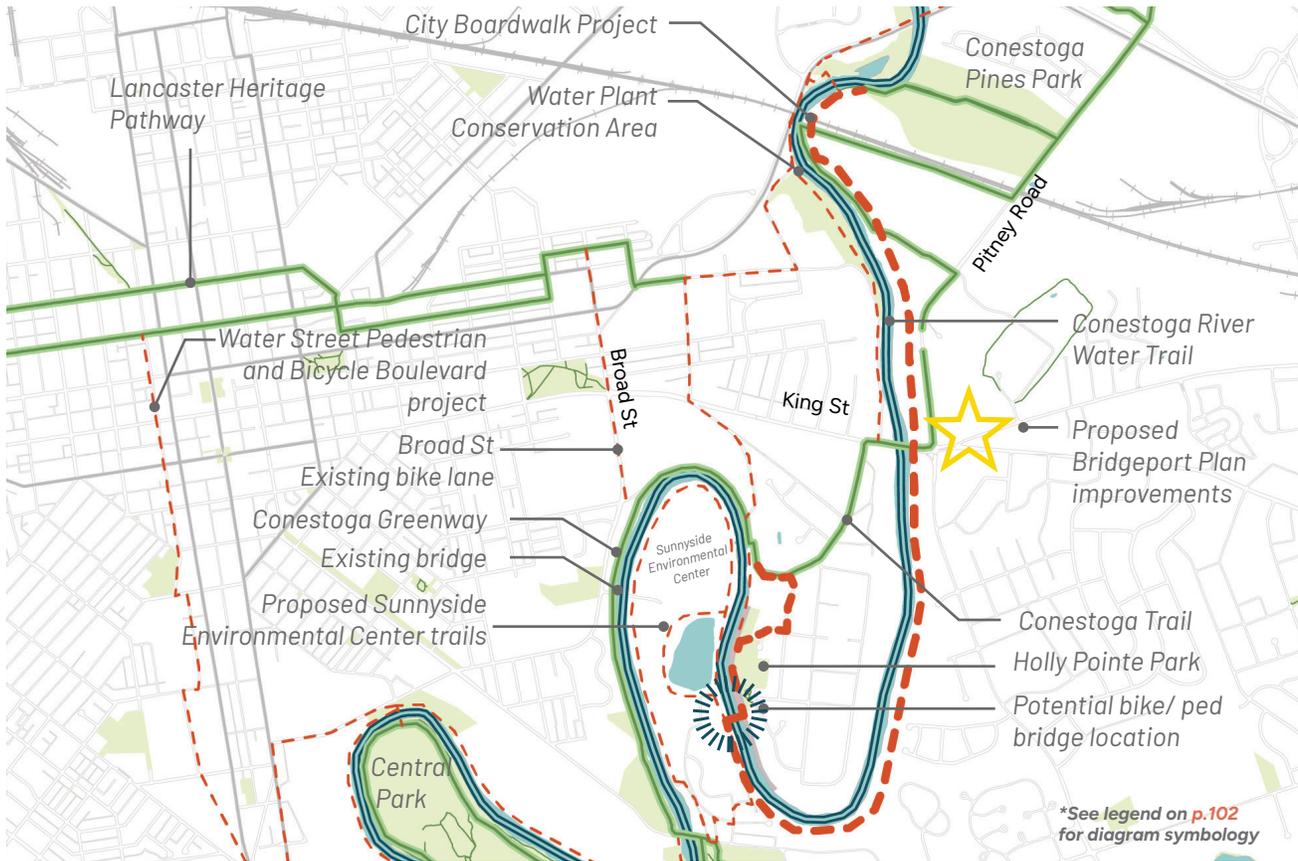


Figure 6.14. Section A of the proposed trail runs mainly along the southern portion of the Conestoga River. Source: OLIN.

Section A focuses on establishing a new trail along the eastern edge of the Conestoga River to close a critical gap between existing greenway segments and major park destinations. The proposed alignment would connect Conestoga Pines and the Lancaster Heritage Pathway to Central Park and the planned Sunnyside Peninsula trails, creating a continuous river-oriented corridor.

The proposed trail passes through the Water Plant Conservation Area, where an existing pedestrian bridge and City-owned property provide an important opportunity for river crossing. However, implementation is complicated by fragmented residential and industrial ownership and the need to secure multiple easements.

Farther downstream, the current proposed alignment requires a new bridge crossing over the river to connect to Holly Pointe Park, but this would leverage existing parkland and Conservancy-held easements.

As the Sunnyside Peninsula trails come online, closing this trail gap would provide local residents a more connected and cohesive trail network between various recreational assets.



Conestoga Pines. Source: OLIN.

## SECTION B

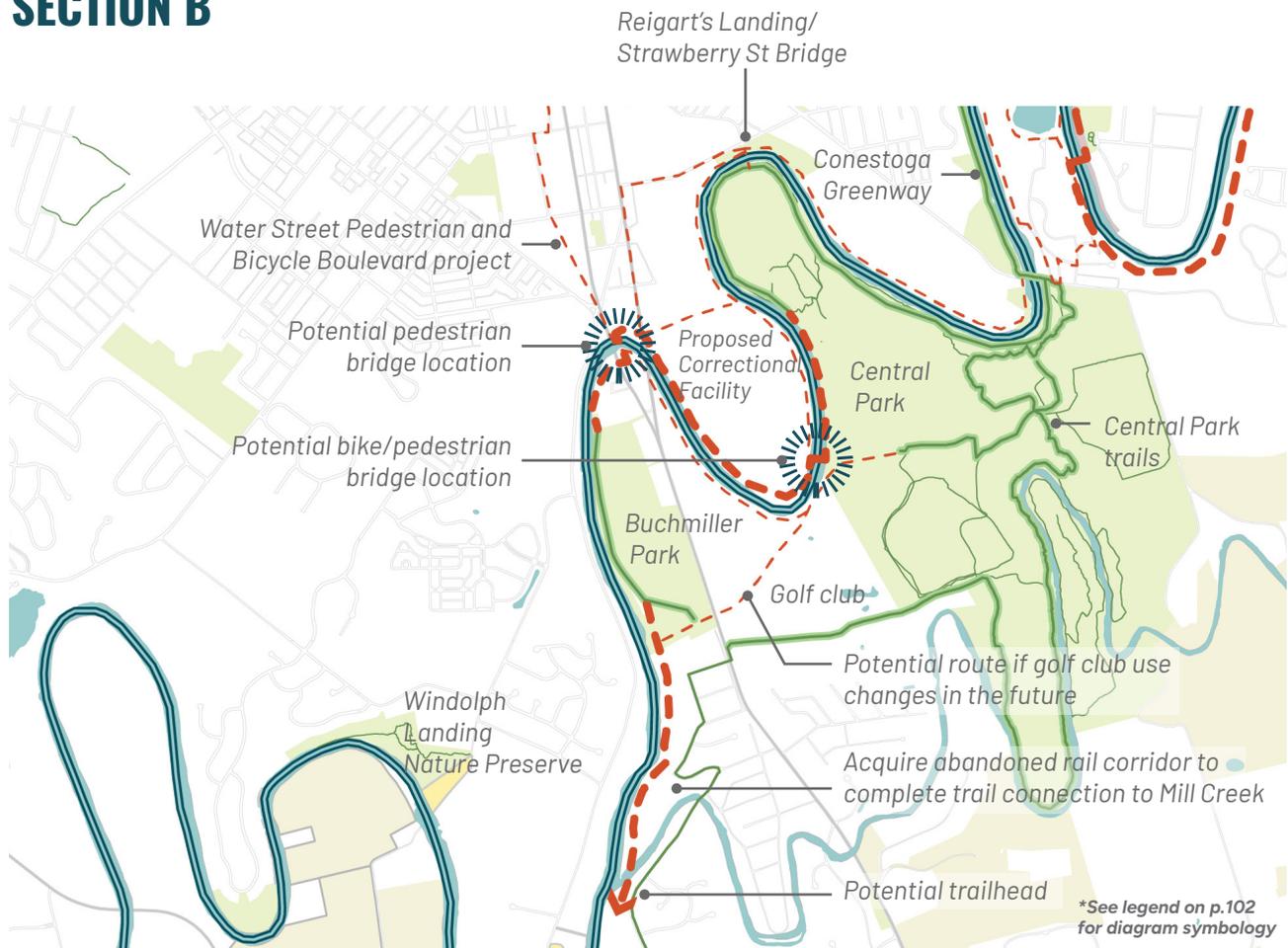


Figure 6.15. Section B connects Central and Buchmiller Park by running along the northern side of Conestoga River before crossing at an abandoned railroad bridge. Source: OLIN.

Section B focuses on extending the Conestoga Greenway through Central Park and Buchmiller Park. This segment takes advantage of established trail infrastructure within both parks, reinforcing their role as anchor destinations along the greenway.

The proposed trail linking the parks would run on the northern side of the river where a new correctional facility is proposed, before crossing back to Buchmiller Park using an abandoned railroad bridge. Farther south, connections to Windolph Landing and Conservancy-owned easements create the potential to extend river access and trail continuity along the Conestoga River while preserving sensitive natural areas.

The completion of this trail gap creates connections not just along the Conestoga Greenway but to other County and City projects, like the Water Street Pedestrian and Bicycle Boulevard project, that extend the recreational trail network into neighboring communities.



The proposed trail would connect to the existing Conestoga Trail in Central Park. Source: OLIN.



Lancaster Conservancy's Windolph Landing Nature Preserve. Source: OLIN.

# CONEWAGO - NORTHWEST RIVER TRAIL

DAUPHIN  
COUNTY

**Connecting the Conewago Trail to the Northwest River Trail represents one of the most important remaining gaps in the County’s overall trail network.**

Together, these trails anchor access to the Susquehanna River corridor and serve many residents and visitors, yet the lack of a continuous connection limits their full potential as a countywide and regional asset. Closing this gap would create a continuous corridor linking communities, parks, and waterways while advancing county and regional connectivity goals.

This trail gap traverses a constrained landscape shaped by roadways, utilities, agricultural land, and sensitive natural resources. Much of the corridor is characterized by preserved agricultural land and privately owned properties, where public trail access is limited or prohibited, significantly constraining off-road alignment options. There are also fewer existing features such as rail lines or continuous public open space to follow, making it difficult to establish a dedicated trail without relying on roadways.

As a result, portions of the connection may need to remain on-road, which raises concerns related to user safety, comfort, and compatibility with vehicular traffic. In addition, the geography of the corridor may require coordination with Dauphin County, which introduces added complexity related to inter-county planning, permitting, and implementation.

All potential trail alignments will need to be carefully studied further to balance feasibility, safety, environmental stewardship, and user experience.

## LEGEND

- |   |                     |   |                                  |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
|  | Segment Start / End |  | Trail                            |
|  | Park/Open Space     |  | Water Trail                      |
|  | Protected Farmland  | <b>PROPOSED TRAILS</b>  |                                  |
|  | Water               |  | Proposed Trail (Preferred)       |
|   |                     |  | Proposed Trail (Alternate Route) |

Figure 6.16. Conewago - Northwest River Trail Gap Concept Routes. Source: OLIN.

PHIN  
NTY

SECTION C

SECTION B

ELIZABETHTOWN  
BOROUGH

SECTION A

WEST DONEGAL  
TOWNSHIP

SHIP

BAINBRIDGE

N 0 0.75 1.5 miles



# SECTION A

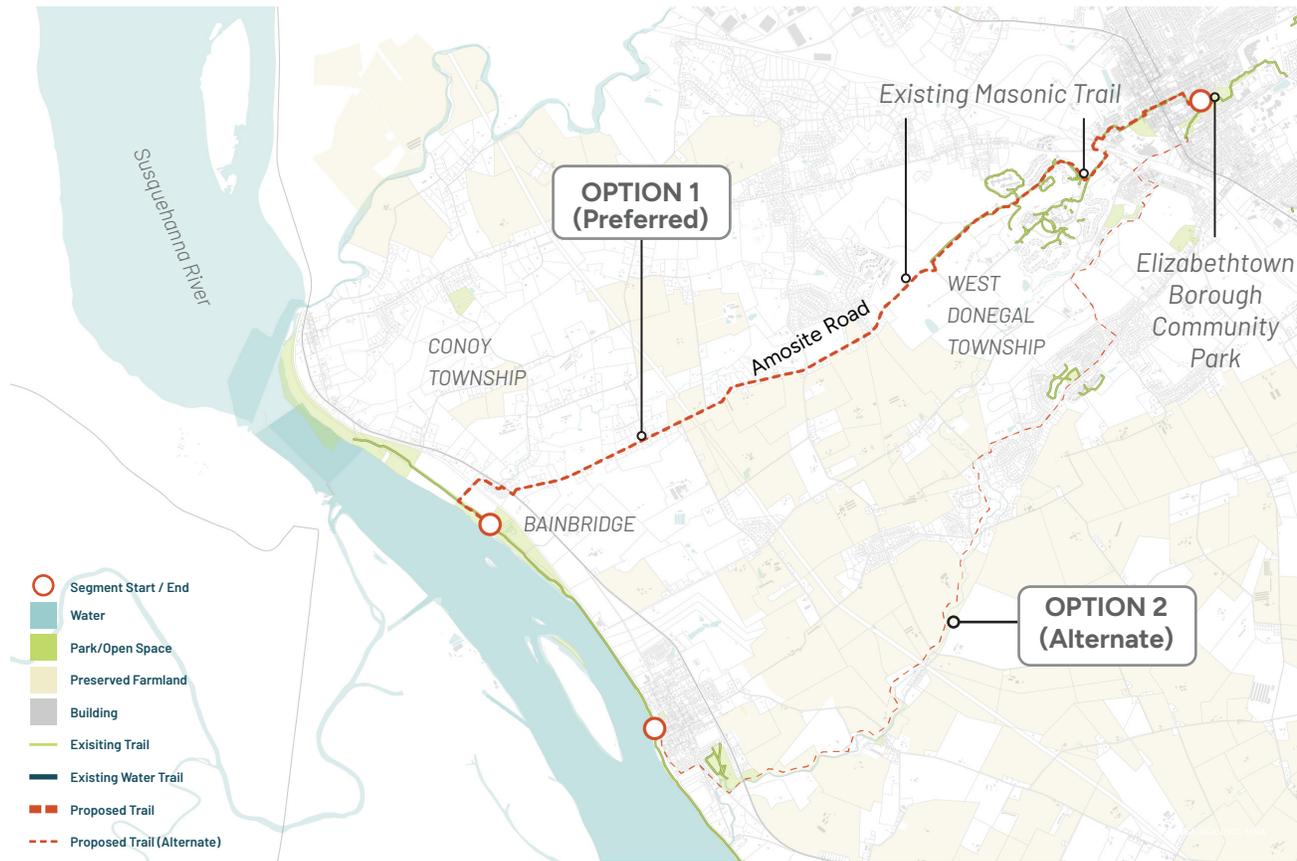


Figure 6.17. Conewago - NWRT - Section A. Source: OLIN.

## Option 1 (Preferred)

The preferred trail alignment begins and ends at the Elizabethtown Borough Community Park and the Northwest River Trail trailhead in Bainbridge. It builds on existing infrastructure by utilizing the Conoy Township 33-foot right-of-way and the existing Masonic Trail, making it more feasible and implementable in the near term. By relying largely on public or previously established corridors, this option minimizes the need for new land acquisition, reduces permitting and construction complexity, and can potentially lower overall project cost. The alignment provides a direct connection between the riverfront and Elizabethtown Borough Community Park, advancing regional connectivity goals while limiting impacts to surrounding agricultural and natural lands.

## Option 2 (Alternate)

The alternate alignment follows Conoy Creek for a greater portion of the route, offering a more scenic, nature-oriented trail experience with stronger visual and ecological connections to the stream corridor. However, this option requires securing multiple trail easements from private landowners, significantly increasing coordination, cost, and implementation time. Careful environmental design and mitigation strategies would also be needed to avoid impacts to the creek. While less immediately feasible, this option presents a long-term opportunity to enhance scenic value and ecological engagement if implementation barriers can be addressed through partnerships and funding.



View of Amosite Road with a multi-use trail separated from the road with a planted buffer. Source: OLIN.



**Top left:**  
Conditions along Amosite Road.  
Source: Google Earth.

**Top right:**  
Conditions along Amosite Road.  
Source: Google Earth.

**Bottom left:**  
Conditions along the existing  
Masonic Trail. Source: Google  
Earth.

**Bottom right:**  
Conditions along the existing  
Masonic Trail. Source: Google  
Earth.

# SECTION B

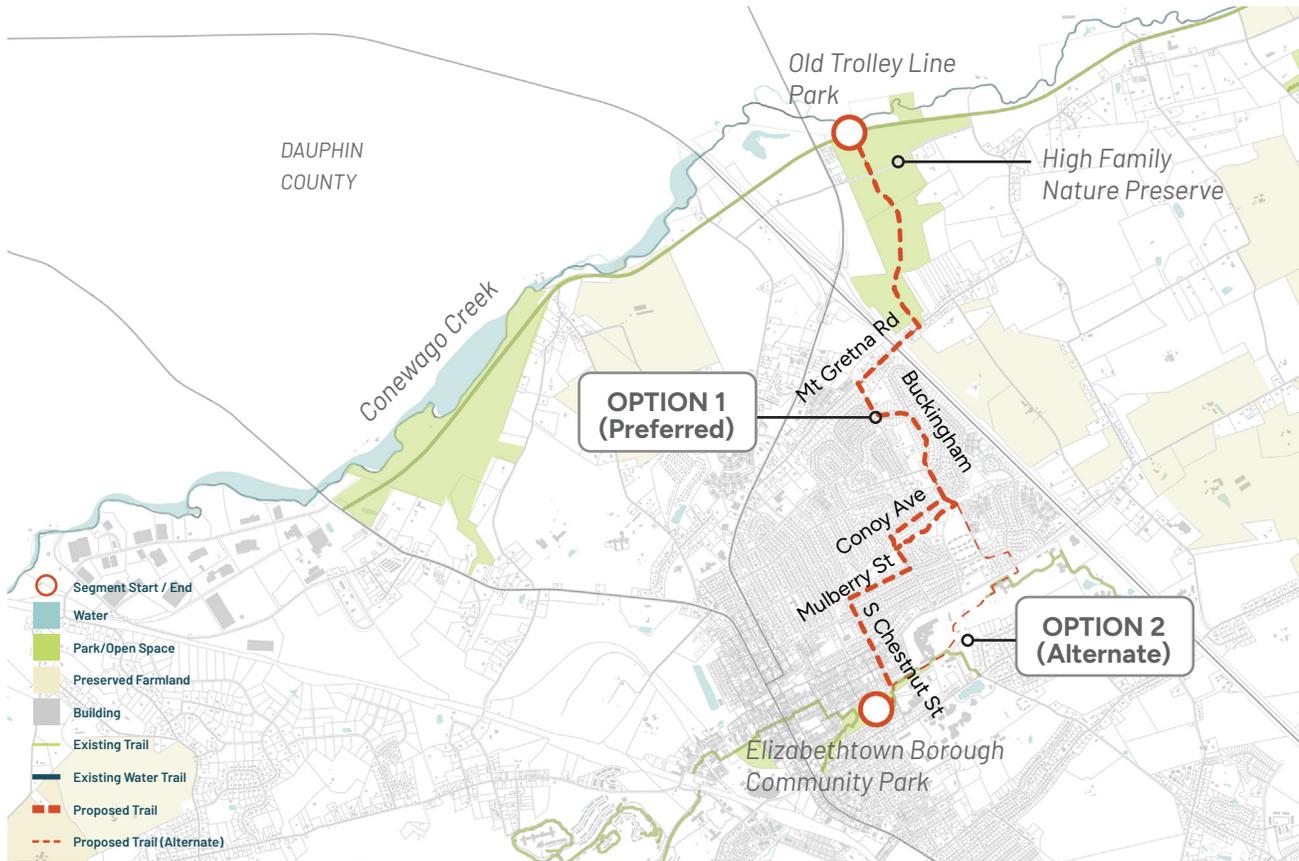


Figure 6.18. Conewago - NWRT - Section B. Source: OLIN.

## Option 1 (Preferred)

The preferred option follows an on-road alignment through Elizabethtown, beginning from Elizabethtown Borough Community Park and through the High Family Nature Reserve and Old Trolley Line Park to link up to the Conewago Recreation Trail. By utilizing existing roadways and rights-of-way, this option reduces the need for new infrastructure and limits the need for property acquisition. The route generally runs on wide, suburban roads with existing sidewalks.

A key constraint in this focus area is that the trail must follow Mt. Gretna Road for a portion of the alignment, including the overpass bridge. This section presents safety concerns due to higher traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, and limited separation between trail users and motor vehicles. These conditions underscore the importance of careful design, traffic-calming measures, and other elements to improve safety and user comfort along this corridor.

## Option 2 (Alternate)

The alternate option follows much of the preferred option's route, but builds on an existing off-road trail segment behind the high school. This creates a segment that is more separated and potentially more comfortable for users. This option would require additional coordination with the high school and other impacted landowners.



View of Mulberry Road with roadway markings and wayfinding along the sidewalk. Source: OLIN.



**Top left:**  
Conditions along S. Chestnut Road. Source: OLIN.

**Top right:**  
Conditions along Conoy Ave/ Buckingham Rd. Source: OLIN.

**Bottom left:**  
Conditions along Mt. Gretna Rd. Source: OLIN.

**Bottom right:**  
Entrance to the High Family Nature Preserve (former Donegal Highlands). Source: OLIN.

# SECTION C

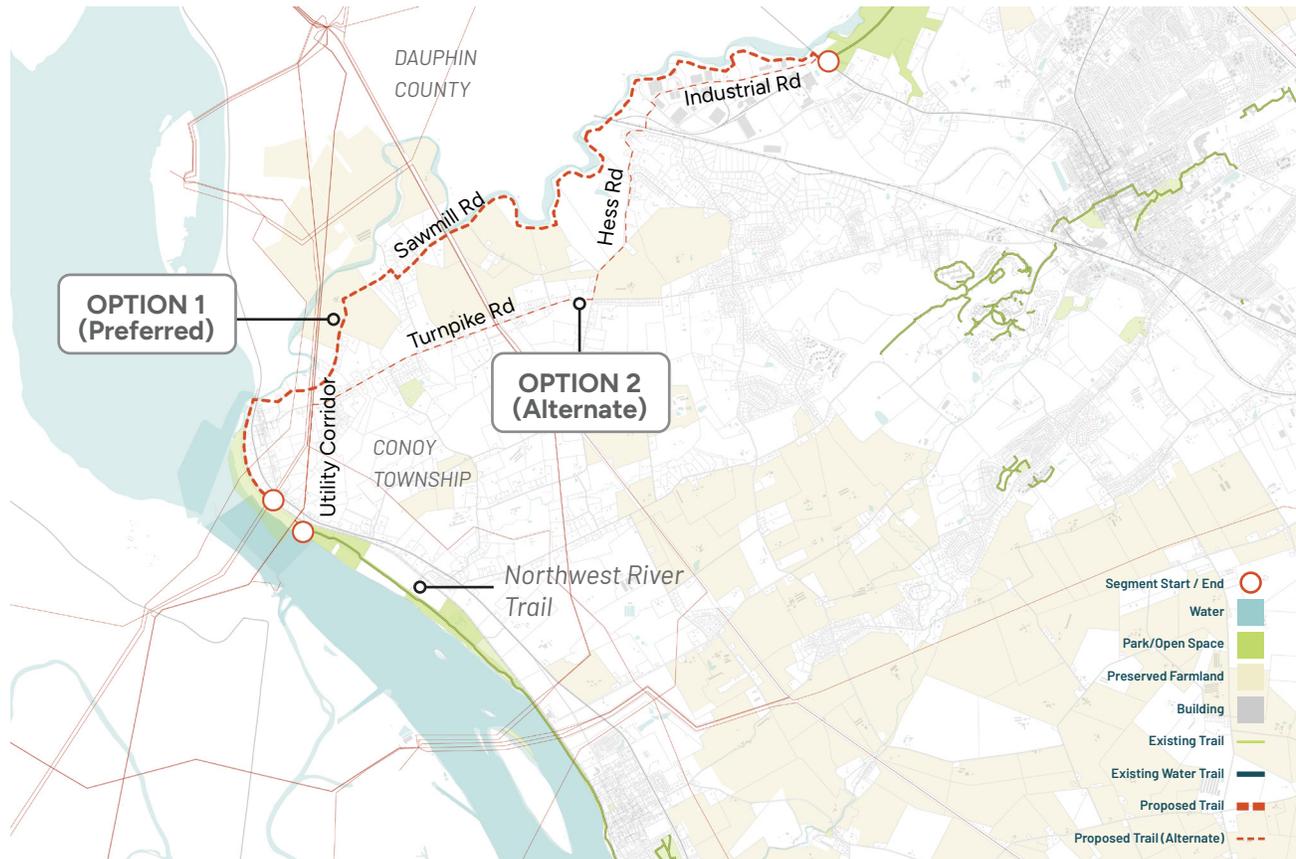


Figure 6.19. Conewago - NWRT - Section C. Source: OLIN.

## Option 1 (Preferred)

The preferred option runs from the trailhead of the Northwest River Trail and links up to the Conewago Recreation Trail in Bainbridge. It follows existing roadways in its southern segment, which run through more scenic experiences and offers a more visually engaging route. However, this alignment involves roadway segments with curves, significant grade changes, and limited sight lines that create safety concerns. This would require careful planning and design, traffic-calming measures, and clear wayfinding.

The second portion of this route follows Conewago Creek, where public access currently does not exist. This alignment offers the benefit of a more scenic, nature-oriented experience and the opportunity to introduce public access to the creek, strengthening connections to natural resources and enhancing the overall character of the route. However, developing a trail in this corridor would require careful coordination

with private landowners and neighboring Dauphin County and potential easements. It would also require environmentally sensitive design to address floodplain conditions, habitat protection, and permitting considerations.

## Option 2 (Alternate)

The alternate option uses a more direct roadway alignment, following Turnpike Road, Hess Road, and Industrial Road. While less scenic, it offers improved visibility and more predictable traffic conditions. This option may provide a safer and more intuitive route for users, particularly where roadway geometry and sight distance are critical considerations.

There is also an option to utilize a utility corridor in the southern segment to link up to the trailhead. This would require further coordination and an easement agreement with the utility company.



View of a trail along the Conewago Creek with a wayfinding post. Source: OLIN.



**Top left:**  
Existing Conewago Recreation Trail. Source: OLIN.

**Top right:**  
Conditions along Conewago Creek. Source: Google Earth.

**Bottom left:**  
Conditions along Conewago Creek. Source: Google Earth.

**Bottom right:**  
Conditions along Sawmill Rd. Source: OLIN.

# 07

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Drone photo from House Rock Overlook at Clark Nature Preserve. Source: Lancaster Conservancy (Credit: Gregory Smolin)



# IMPLEMENTATION

**Implementation is among the most important aspects of a long-range plan. This chapter lists each of the policies and actions associated with the PTMP's seven goals, and outlines how and when they will be accomplished. As the entity leading the plan, Lancaster County will be responsible for carrying out many of the plan's components, but there are also partnerships with other entities, organizations and alignment with funding sources and communication that are necessary for successful implementation. Finally, not all aspects of the plan can be done at once, so the implementation table describes the timing and pacing of each of the actions, so that they can be prioritized and distributed over time. Implementation opportunities by Planning Area help describe and illustrate the importance of local partnerships to realize the Plan's vision.**

## GROWTH

Ensure the availability of sufficient and accessible county parkland to meet the current and future recreational needs of Lancaster County residents, in alignment with projected population growth.

1.1 Continue the adopted standard of 5 acres per 1,000 individuals, as a guideline for county-owned parkland.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>1.1.1</b> Maintain an up-to-date inventory of public, semi-public (i.e. utility lands, authority lands, etc.), and private non-profit outdoor recreation land in Lancaster County	Lancaster County	n/a	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>1.1.2</b> Assess parkland acreage and distribution annually using population growth projections and adopted level-of-service standards in each planning region.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	Annual
» <b>1.1.3</b> Publish results of the annual park assessment on the County Planning Department's public-facing Data Dashboard landing page.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	Annual

1.2 Acquire available land around the county's core parklands to meet existing and future Level of Service (LOS) needs and address service gaps.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>1.2.1</b> Work with landowners and possibly other outdoor recreation partners to acquire parcels identified in the master plan.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy PA Game Commission	DCNR, Highlands funding, Act 13 Marcellus Shale Funding	On-going
» <b>1.2.2</b> Leverage DCNR and Highlands Funding to the greatest extent necessary for new park land acquisitions.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy	DCNR, Highlands funding, Act 13 Marcellus Legacy Fund	On-going

## GROWTH

Ensure the availability of sufficient and accessible county parkland to meet the current and future recreational needs of Lancaster County residents, in alignment with projected population growth.

### 1.3 Consider acquiring new parks when large landholdings such as private golf courses, campgrounds, utility lands, and authority holdings become available, especially in areas of greatest need.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>1.3.1</b> Maintain inventory of large parcels adjacent to parks, suitable for new parks, or recreation lands lacking permanent protection that could become available in the future.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy	Operating Budget	On-going
» <b>1.3.2</b> Use tools such as “right-of-first refusal” agreements to acquire suitable future parkland when it becomes available.	Lancaster County	Private Landowners, municipalities, utilities, Lancaster Conservancy	Operating budget	On-going

### 1.4 Focus on natural resource-based land acquisitions for passive outdoor recreation opportunities

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>1.4.1</b> Utilize ecological analysis to target ecological investment areas. This includes high biodiversity areas; core habitat areas; climate resilient, environmentally sensitive areas such as streams and steep slopes; and corridors that connect these ecologically valuable resources.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy, Municipalities	Operating budget	Long-term

## ACCESS

Enhance access and multimodal opportunities to outdoor recreation opportunities to meet the needs and improve the wellbeing of all county residents.

2.1 Use planning areas to ensure that parkland acreage is distributed equitably to individuals living across the County.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>2.1.1</b> Consult population projections to focus parkland acquisition in areas of greatest need.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	Annual
» <b>2.1.2</b> Advocate for county parkland to be distributed across the county so that every resident is within a 10-mile radius of a county park or large Lancaster Conservancy Nature Preserve.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.1.3</b> Work with partner organizations and municipalities to address parkland deficits in regions of the county where existing park acreage is below the current LOS standard and projected growth.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy, Municipalities	DCNR, Highlands funding, Marcellus Legacy Fund	On-going
» <b>2.1.4</b> Identify opportunities for parkland expansion along existing and proposed trails to meet acreage needs in the Northwest, West, and Metro regions. Partner with the Lancaster Conservancy, state agencies and municipalities to create or expand nature preserves along existing trails, like the Conewago Trail and the Northwest River Trail.	Lancaster County	PA Game Commission, DCNR, Lancaster Conservancy, Municipalities, Susquehanna National Heritage Area	DCNR, Highlands funding, Marcellus Legacy Fund	On-going
» <b>2.1.5.</b> Monitor the availability of large unprotected natural resource areas such as lands adjacent to Game Lands 156, the Octoraro Reservoir, and Muddy Run Lake for opportunities to add to the county's outdoor recreation portfolio.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy, DCNR, PA Game Commission	DCNR, Highlands funding, Marcellus Legacy Fund	On-going

## ACCESS

Enhance access and multimodal opportunities to outdoor recreation opportunities to meet the needs and improve the wellbeing of all county residents.

### 2.2 Prioritize acquiring parkland in the Metro area to align with the greatest concentration of diverse populations in the County.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>2.2.1</b> Evaluate park and trail opportunities for development with Lancaster City and adjoining municipalities and recreational partners.	Lancaster County	Metro Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going

### 2.3 Work with municipalities to add parkland in projected high growth areas where acreage is needed.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>2.3.1</b> Encourage municipalities to adopt a level-of-service standard of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.3.2</b> Encourage municipalities to focus on providing “active” outdoor recreation opportunities for their residents, based on their individual demographic profile.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.3.3</b> Work with local municipalities to include new parkland in Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budgets.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.3.4</b> Encourage municipalities to identify new neighborhood and community park opportunities in local plans.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.3.5</b> Encourage municipalities to consider using an Earned Income Tax, subject to voter referendum, to fund municipal park and trail acquisition and development.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.3.6</b> Encourage municipalities to adopt mandatory dedication of land ordinances to add parkland to serve residents in new developments as they are constructed.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going

## ACCESS

Enhance access and multimodal opportunities to outdoor recreation opportunities to meet the needs and improve the wellbeing of all county residents.

2.4 Connect with diverse populations to better understand how to make County parks more welcoming to Lancaster Countians of all backgrounds.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>2.4.1</b> Utilize demographic analysis to understand population dynamics, ensuring that all populations, inclusive of age, ability, and background, have nearby access to high quality outdoor recreation assets.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.4.2</b> Conduct focused community outreach to county identity communities (non-white, limited English proficiency, people with disabilities) to better understand recreational needs.	Lancaster County	Community organizations, Recreation Providers	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>2.4.3</b> Install features in parks that match these community concerns.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Community organizations	DCNR, Marcellus Legacy Fund	Long-term
» <b>2.4.4</b> Include intergenerational programming in parks.	Lancaster County	Office of Aging, youth organizations	Operating budget	Long-term
2.5 Strive to provide accessible options, where appropriate, in County parks.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>2.5.1</b> Conduct an accessibility inventory of existing parks.	Lancaster County	Office of Aging, disability advocacy groups, Recreation Providers	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>2.5.2</b> Advocate for the development of accessibility standards for County and municipal parks, to include ADA accessible amenities, such as bathrooms, ramps, benches and activities.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, DCNR	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>2.5.3</b> Encourage the development of Universal Access Trails (both land and water) and support their construction where appropriate.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, DCNR	Operating budget	On-going

## ECONOMY

**Leverage outdoor recreation resources to expand business and job opportunities, to attract tourists, and to improve the economic health and vitality of Lancaster County communities.**

### **3.1 Support the implementation of the Lancaster County Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan prepared by Lancaster EDC, ensuring initiatives are coordinated with and reinforce the plan's action areas of promoting the outdoors, activating assets, connecting businesses, stewarding assets, and monitoring impacts.**

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>3.1.1</b> Highlight the economic benefits of investing in parks, trails and open space resources as talking points for negotiating with municipalities, landowners and public officials for the acquisition of new parcels and connections.	Lancaster County	EDC Lancaster County	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>3.1.2</b> Partner with the real estate community to underscore the importance of parks and open space resources to welcome new Lancaster Countians.	Lancaster County	EDC Lancaster County, Lancaster Association of Realtors	Operating budget	Long Term
» <b>3.1.3</b> Support the development of a Trail Towns program to promote economic development for municipalities adjacent to current and future regional trails.	Lancaster County	EDC Lancaster County, Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>3.1.4</b> Advocate for amenities to support recreational tourism, such as overnight stays, bike parking, and outfitting businesses near County parks and trails.	Lancaster County	EDC Lancaster County, Discover Lancaster	Operational budget	On-going
» <b>3.1.5</b> Monitor and report the use of regional trails by installing trail counters where possible.	Lancaster County	EDC Lancaster County, Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going

## ECONOMY

**Leverage outdoor recreation resources to expand business and job opportunities, to attract tourists, and to improve the economic health and vitality of Lancaster County communities.**

<b>3.2 Partner with Discover Lancaster and other local marketing entities to promote County parks and trails.</b>				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>3.2.1</b> Highlight current and future recreational resources in local tourism materials.	Lancaster County	Discover Lancaster	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>3.2.2</b> Partner to organize and promote special events that highlight parks, trails, and open spaces alongside food, art and vendors to draw tourists and bring local residents together in community spaces.	Lancaster County	Discover Lancaster, municipalities, nonprofits, Susquehanna National Heritage Area, DCNR, advocacy groups	Operating budget	On-going

## CONNECTIONS

Connect the land and water trail networks to enhance connectivity to urban areas, access points and other trail and transportation systems.

### 4.1 Close the gaps between regional trails and connect them to urban centers and large parks where possible.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>4.1.1</b> Utilize the Countywide trail map to guide future trail planning and close critical gaps.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Hiking Club, Lancaster Bicycle Club	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>4.1.2</b> Secure necessary trail rights-of-way through easements and partnerships with local landowners and advocacy organizations.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>4.1.3</b> Encourage municipalities to identify new trail opportunities in local plans and in local Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budgets, for implementation.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>4.1.4.</b> Support the implementation of the Conestoga River Water Trail Access Improvement Plan prepared by the Conestoga River Club.	Lancaster County	Conestoga River Club, Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>4.1.5</b> Annually track new miles of trail added across the County.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	Annual

### 4.2 Connect trails in the county to trails in neighboring counties to extend the regional network.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>4.2.1</b> Work with York, Dauphin, and Chester counties, state agencies and trail organizations to coordinate planning efforts, and pursue joint funding opportunities.	Lancaster County	Adjacent counties, DCNR, PEC, Lancaster Conservancy	DCNR, PennDOT, DCED, CFT, Marcellus Legacy Fund	On-going
» <b>4.2.2</b> Coordinate with state and regional efforts such as the 9/11 Trail, Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and the Schuylkill to Susquehanna Greenway.	Lancaster County	DCNR, National Park Service	Operating budget	On-going

## CONNECTIONS

Connect the land and water trail networks to enhance connectivity to urban areas, access points and other trail and transportation systems.

4.3 Support the implementation of the Lancaster County MPO Traffic Safety Action Plan alongside any other future trail planning efforts that improve the safety of trail users in the County and region.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>4.3.1</b> Work with partners to implement the Traffic Safety Action Plan, especially near County parks and trails.	Lancaster County	PennDOT, Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
4.4 Expand cross-agency communication with the Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA), and other relevant municipal/ City/County agencies to align trail efforts.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>4.4.1</b> Share plans and participate in regular meetings to track progress.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, RRTA	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>4.4.2</b> Encourage RRTA to incorporate stops and major trailheads to enhance access to the regional trail network.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, RRTA	Operating budget	On-going
4.5 Consider new land and water trail opportunities and connections.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>4.5.1</b> Regularly re-evaluate new land and water trail opportunities for consideration.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority, Susquehanna National Heritage Area	Operating budget	On-going

## NATURE

### Protect and restore natural resource systems-waterways, wildlife habitat, and core forests-within and adjacent to parks and trails.

5.1 Invest in restoring or enhancing the natural resources within the County's existing parks.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>5.1.1</b> Acquire conservation easements where needed on lands adjacent to County parks to protect scenic landscapes and environmentally sensitive natural resources.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>5.1.2</b> Develop stewardship strategies for each of the County's parks to enhance ecological services including increased woodlands, tree canopy, management of invasive species, restoring streams, wetlands and floodplain connectivity.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>5.1.3</b> Restore natural areas within county parks by gradually converting excess grass lawn areas and agricultural lands to their natural state.	Lancaster County	n/a	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>5.1.4</b> Enlist volunteer or community organizations to assist with the protection and stewardship of natural resources in county parks to reduce invasive species, restore riparian areas, and increase tree canopy.	Lancaster County	Community Organizations	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>5.1.5</b> Incorporate green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, bioswales, native tree plantings, and other nature-based stormwater management, into the planning, design, and maintenance of County parks and trails to manage stormwater, improve water quality, enhance habitat, and strengthen climate resilience.	Lancaster County	n/a	Operating budget	On-going

## NATURE

### Protect and restore natural resource systems-waterways, wildlife habitat, and core forests-within and adjacent to parks and trails.

5.2 Encourage municipalities to incorporate ecologically important natural lands suitable for passive recreation opportunities into existing or new parks.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>5.2.1</b> Share ecological analysis with municipalities to help them target important natural lands in park plans and minimize disruption of environmentally sensitive areas such as streams, riparian areas, and tree canopy when developing parkland for active recreation. Consider including elements of passive recreation within municipal parkland to protect and highlight these areas.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>5.2.2</b> Encourage municipalities to protect scenic agricultural lands adjacent to parks and trails that contribute to the County’s cultural landscape assets. Explore strategies such as conservation easements or partnerships with landowners to protect viewsheds, rural character, and the visual connection between open space and agricultural land.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster County Ag. Preserve Board, Lancaster Farmland Trust	Operating budget	On-going
5.3 Enhance biodiversity, wildlife habitat, stream restoration, and natural resource protection along trails.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>5.3.1</b> Adopt ecologically sensitive design principles for trail development. (See call out box)	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy	Operating budget	On-going

## NATURE

Protect and restore natural resource systems-waterways, wildlife habitat, and core forests-within and adjacent to parks and trails.

### 5.4 Coordinate with regional natural resource conservation entities to comprehensively address biodiversity and ecosystems services.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>5.4.1</b> Support the formation of a Regional Conservation Partnership Network to align priorities and share updates.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy, Western PA Conservancy	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>5.4.2</b> Work with Regional Conservation Partnership Network members to integrate results of the baseline assessment into land use planning and restoration priorities. Jointly apply for grants and other funding sources to implement restoration priorities.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy, Western PA Conservancy	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>5.4.3</b> Develop an ecological assessment baseline of all parks and trails to characterize the current state of ecological health including the vegetative community, streams, and wetlands and identify restoration priorities.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy, Western PA Conservancy	Operating budget	Long-term

## INVESTMENT

Invest in existing and proposed parks and trails, advocating for permanent protection.

6.1 Identify improvements to existing parks and trails based on community input.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>6.1.1</b> Complete individual master plans for County Parks and include detailed studies, such as condition and capacity assessments and revised maintenance protocols.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Conservation organizations, Community organizations	DCNR, Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>6.1.2</b> Integrate historic resources preservation and interpretation into park and trail plans.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County	Operating budget	Long-term
6.2 Work to permanently protect all trails, including Conestoga Trail and Horse-Shoe Trail that lack permanent easements.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>6.2.1</b> Develop detailed design and development plans for trails needing permanent protection.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Hiking Club, Horse-Shoe Trail Club, Municipalities, Lancaster Bicycle Club	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>6.2.2</b> Use trail easements to permanently protect trails or connect to priority parcels (See Action 1.3.1). Ideally work with municipalities or trail authority (see Policy 7.1) to hold easements.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Hiking Club, Horse-Shoe Trail Club	DCNR, Operating budget	Long-term

## INVESTMENT

Invest in existing and proposed parks and trails, advocating for permanent protection.

### 6.3 Develop and install a unified system of wayfinding, signage, and site furnishings for County parks and trails to establish continuity and a sense of identity.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>6.3.1</b> Identify funds for signage, wayfinding, and site furnishings such as benches, lighting, and trash cans, as applicable.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	DCNR, Operating budget	Long-term

### 6.4 Engage and assist state, local, and non-profit outdoor recreation providers in expanding parks, trails, and open space opportunities.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>6.4.1</b> Identify financial support for open space amenities such as parking lots, bathrooms, water access and paddling launches, and signage for other parks and open space landowners such as the Lancaster Conservancy, and the Conestoga Canoe Club.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, Conestoga Canoe Club, Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority, Susquehanna National Heritage Area, Partners for Environmental Stewardship	DCNR, Marcellus Legacy Fund	On-going

### 6.5 Support the expansion of water-based outdoor recreation opportunities wherever possible.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>6.5.1</b> Highlight the importance of water trails for County connectivity and recreation.	Lancaster County	Conestoga River Club, Susquehanna National Heritage Area	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>6.5.2</b> Work with municipalities and other partners to develop new water access points along waterways in existing parks and other publicly accessible lands.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Conestoga River Club, Susquehanna National Heritage Area, PA Fish & Boat Commission, DCNR	Municipalities, DCNR, PA Fish & Boat Commission	On-going

## ADVOCACY

Enhance management of parks and trails by local communities and organizations to support and increase recreational opportunities.

7.1 Establish a strategy for improving coordinated and collaborative management of trails in Lancaster County.				
Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>7.1.1</b> Appoint a county-wide trails advisory board or group, following detailed coordination with municipalities, nonprofits and advocacy organizations to assess trail management needs.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, SNHA, LCSWMA	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>7.1.2</b> Consider creating a trails coordinator position within the county to work with trail owners and managers throughout the county, with appropriate funding to support.	Lancaster County	n/a	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>7.1.3</b> Encourage municipalities to form trail advisory committees that will work to prioritize neighborhood connections to larger trail networks.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>7.1.4</b> Convene parks, trails, outdoor recreation and open space providers on a regular basis to understand and update community priorities.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Recreation Providers, Lancaster Conservancy, Western PA Conservancy	Operating budget	Annual

## ADVOCACY

Enhance management of parks and trails by local communities and organizations to support and increase recreational opportunities.

### 7.2 Develop/implement a funding and revenue strategy that leverages county investment in the management and coordination of parks and trails.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>7.2.1</b> Pursue state funding, such as DCNR's Circuit Rider Program, to strengthen coordination of parks and trails, such as hiring a trails coordination position and other operational support.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, Western PA Conservancy	DCNR, Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>7.2.2</b> Evaluate feasibility of dedicated funding sources such as real estate transfer tax or TIF (Tax Increment Financing).	Lancaster County	Municipality	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>7.2.3</b> Evaluate the feasibility of revenue sources such as land leases, permit fees, etc. that provide revenue to offset cost of the trails coordinator position.	Lancaster County	Municipalities	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>7.2.4</b> Leverage funding to support investment in existing parks and trails (see 6.4.1).	Lancaster County	DCNR, Municipalities	Operating budget	Long-term

### 7.3 Leverage resources to provide more support for communities and organizations in Lancaster County on parks and trails.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>7.3.1</b> Consider establishing a Lancaster County Grant Fund for park and trail projects.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, Western PA Conservancy	Marcellus Legacy Fund	Long-term

## ADVOCACY

### Enhance management of parks and trails by local communities and organizations to support and increase recreational opportunities.

» <b>7.3.2</b> Pursue the creation of advocacy or “friends” groups for parks and trails.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Hiking Club, Lancaster Bicycle Club, Lancaster Conservancy, Conestoga River Club	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>7.3.3</b> Pursue collaborative grant opportunities with other local communities and community partners.	Lancaster County	DCNR, Municipalities, Conservation organizations	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>7.3.4</b> Host grant-writing and park management workshops and maintain a resource library for organizations to access.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, Western PA Conservancy	Operating budget	Long-term

### 7.4 Explore alternative land acquisition and access strategies to expand opportunities.

Action	Lead Organization	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources	Timing
» <b>7.4.1</b> Discuss potential park and open space land swaps with outdoor recreation providers.	Lancaster County	Lancaster Conservancy, PA Game Commission	Operating budget	Long-term
» <b>7.4.2</b> Work with partner organizations to coordinate strategies.	Lancaster County	Nonprofits, Advocacy groups, state agencies	Operating budget	On-going
» <b>7.4.3</b> Use conservation easements combined with trail easements to increase outdoor recreation opportunities without having to purchase the land.	Lancaster County	Municipalities, Lancaster Conservancy, Lancaster Hiking Club, Horse-Shoe Trail Club, Lancaster Bicycle Club	DCNR, Mercellus Legacy Fund	On-going

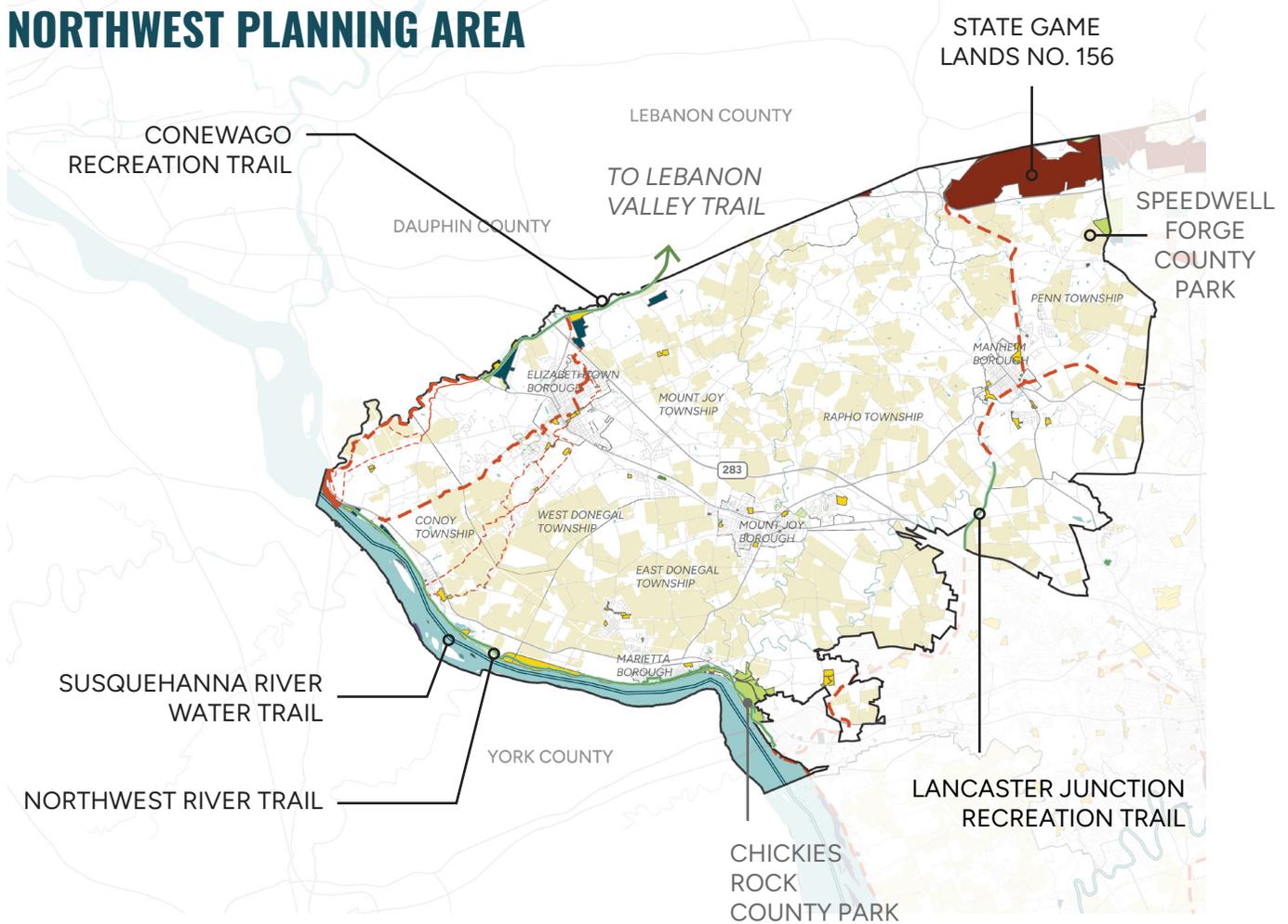


Otter Creek Nature Preserve. Source: Lancaster County  
(Credit: Kelly Snavelly)

# PLANNING AREAS

To illustrate how the proposed countywide parks and trails system connect communities at a local level, each of the proposed trails and parks are shown by planning area. The planning areas are the unit of analysis used to determine parkland level-of-service needs (see Figure 3.2). The parkland acres needed by 2040 to maintain the identified level-of-service of 5 acres per 1,000 people is indicated alongside each region.

## NORTHWEST PLANNING AREA



### PARK OWNERSHIP

- Lancaster County
- Bureau of State Parks/ Bureau of Forestry
- PA Fish & Boat
- Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)
- Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority
- PA Game Commission
- Lancaster Conservancy
- Local Municipalities
- Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, etc.)

### EXISTING TRAILS

- Trail
- Water Trail

### PROPOSED TRAILS

- Proposed Trail (Preferred)
- Proposed Trail (Alternate Route)

- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Preserved Farmland
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road

Figure 7.1. Northwest Planning Area Ownership, Parks, and Trails. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Implementation Opportunities

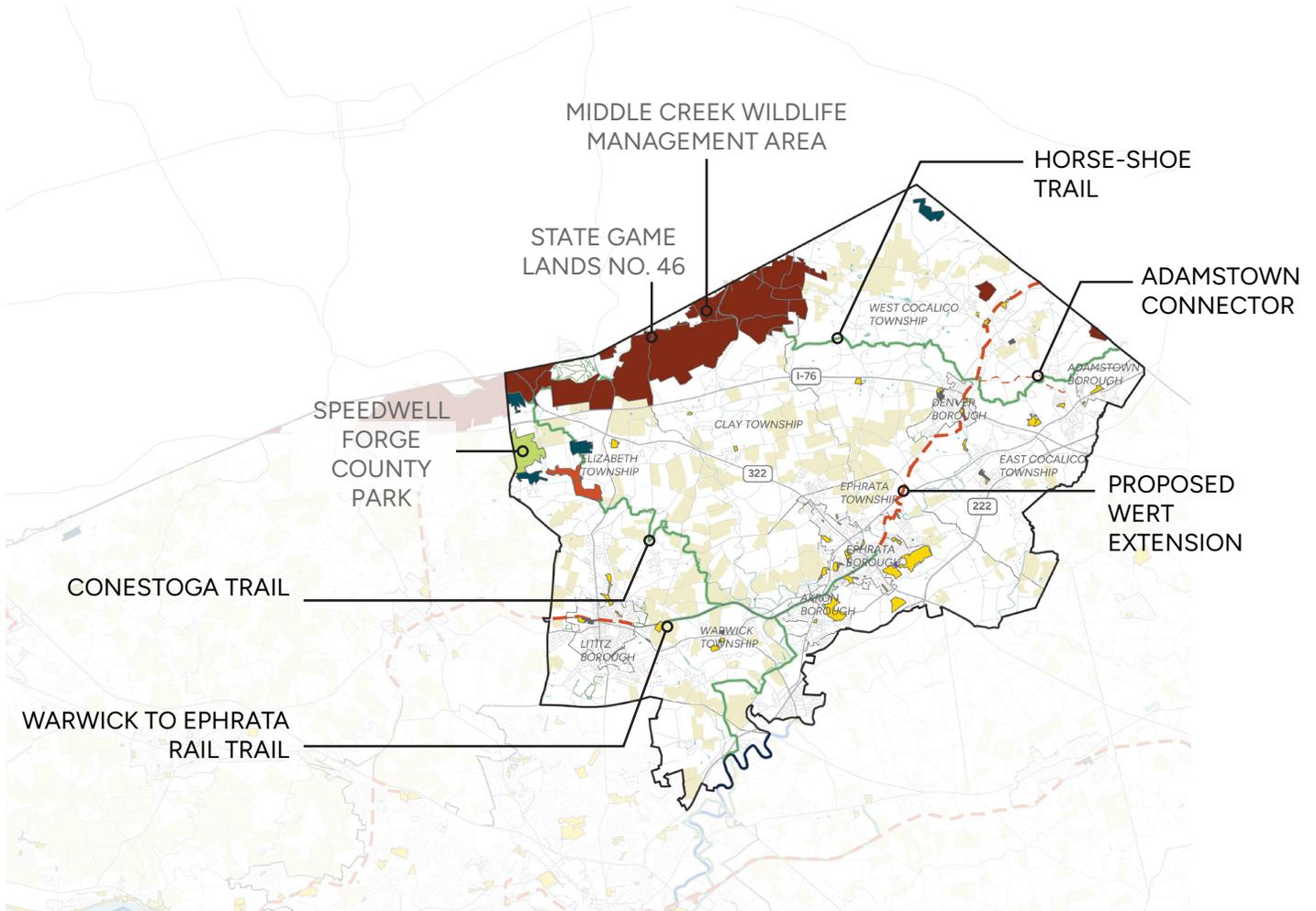
- The largest remaining undeveloped forested parcel in the planning area is located next to State Game Lands No. 156. It represents the region's best opportunity to secure a large, forested property for future outdoor recreation use. Partner with the PA Game Commission and other conservation organizations to pursue its acquisition and addition to State Game Lands 156.
- There are moderate-sized parcels clustered in the northern part of the planning area that, collectively, could help meet future needs. Some of these parcels are adjacent or near existing Lancaster Conservancy nature preserves and may offer opportunities for expansion. Other areas, such as Governor's Stables, should also be considered. Partner with the Lancaster Conservancy to capitalize on these remaining opportunities.
- Partner with Marietta Borough to acquire a key parcel west of Furnace Road, owned by Norfolk Southern, to enable rerouting of the Northwest River Trail off Furnace Road or to provide an alternate route.
- Partner with municipalities in the Northwest Planning Area to connect the Conewago Trail and Northwest River Trail via Elizabethtown Borough. Continue to seek opportunities for off-road trail connections between the two trails.
- Partner with Mount Joy Borough to develop a safe on-road connection to the Northwest River Trail.
- Partner with East Hempfield Township to extend the Lancaster Junction Trail south to Amos Herr Park in Landisville and to the Swarr Run Greenway.
- Seek opportunities to extend the Lancaster Junction Trail north to Manheim Borough.
- Work with Manheim Borough and Penn Township to evaluate the feasibility of using the abandoned Reading & Columbia Railroad line north of the borough as a shared-use trail.
- Monitor the status of the Reading & Columbia Railroad corridor between Manheim and Lititz boroughs, and partner to pursue its acquisition if rail service is discontinued in the future.
- Partner with the Lancaster Conservancy and the Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority to create designated overnight campsites for thru paddlers on Brush and Energy islands for Susquehanna River Water Trail.
- Work with Dauphin County to explore the possibility of extending the Northwest River Trail to Harrisburg.

**Table 7.1: Northwest Planning Area Ownership Summary**

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>%</b>
PA Game Commission	4	2,679	55%
Local Municipalities	68	1,100	22%
Lancaster Conservancy	13	458	9%
Lancaster County	5	426	9%
Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority	5	72	1%
PA Fish & Boat Commission	1	71	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,844</b>	

Source: Lancaster County.

# NORTHEAST PLANNING AREA



## PARK OWNERSHIP

- Lancaster County
- Bureau of State Parks/ Bureau of Forestry
- PA Fish & Boat
- Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)
- Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority
- PA Game Commission
- Lancaster Conservancy
- Local Municipalities
- Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, etc.)

## EXISTING TRAILS

- Trail
- Water Trail

## PROPOSED TRAILS

- Proposed Trail (Preferred)
- Proposed Trail (Alternate Route)

- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Preserved Farmland
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road

Figure 7.2. Northeast Planning Area Ownership, Parks, and Trails. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Implementation Opportunities

- Expand Speedwell Forge County Park where possible to meet the Level of Service goal for the planning area. Consider all opportunities including adjacent agricultural areas zoned for rural residential development.
- Discuss potential land swaps with the Lancaster Conservancy that would make maintenance and management sense for both entities.
- The largest remaining undeveloped forested parcel in the planning region sits between Game Lands No. 46 and Lancaster Conservancy's Texter Mountain Nature Preserve in the Furnace Hills. It represents the region's best opportunity to secure a large, forested property for future outdoor recreation use. If it were to be acquired, smaller, adjacent forested parcels offer opportunities to expand in the future. Partner with the PA Game Commission, Lancaster Conservancy, and other conservation organizations to pursue acquisitions in this area.
- Partner with the Lancaster Conservancy to expand the Texter Mountain Nature Preserve where possible.
- Work with the Lancaster Hiking Club, the Horse-Shoe Trail Club, and host municipalities to develop trail master plans for the Conestoga Trail and Horse-Shoe Trail to preserve existing off-road trail segments and relocate on-road trail segments where possible.
- Support Lititz Borough's effort to extend the Warwick to Ephrata Rail Trail from the eastern edge of the borough to Lititz Springs Park.

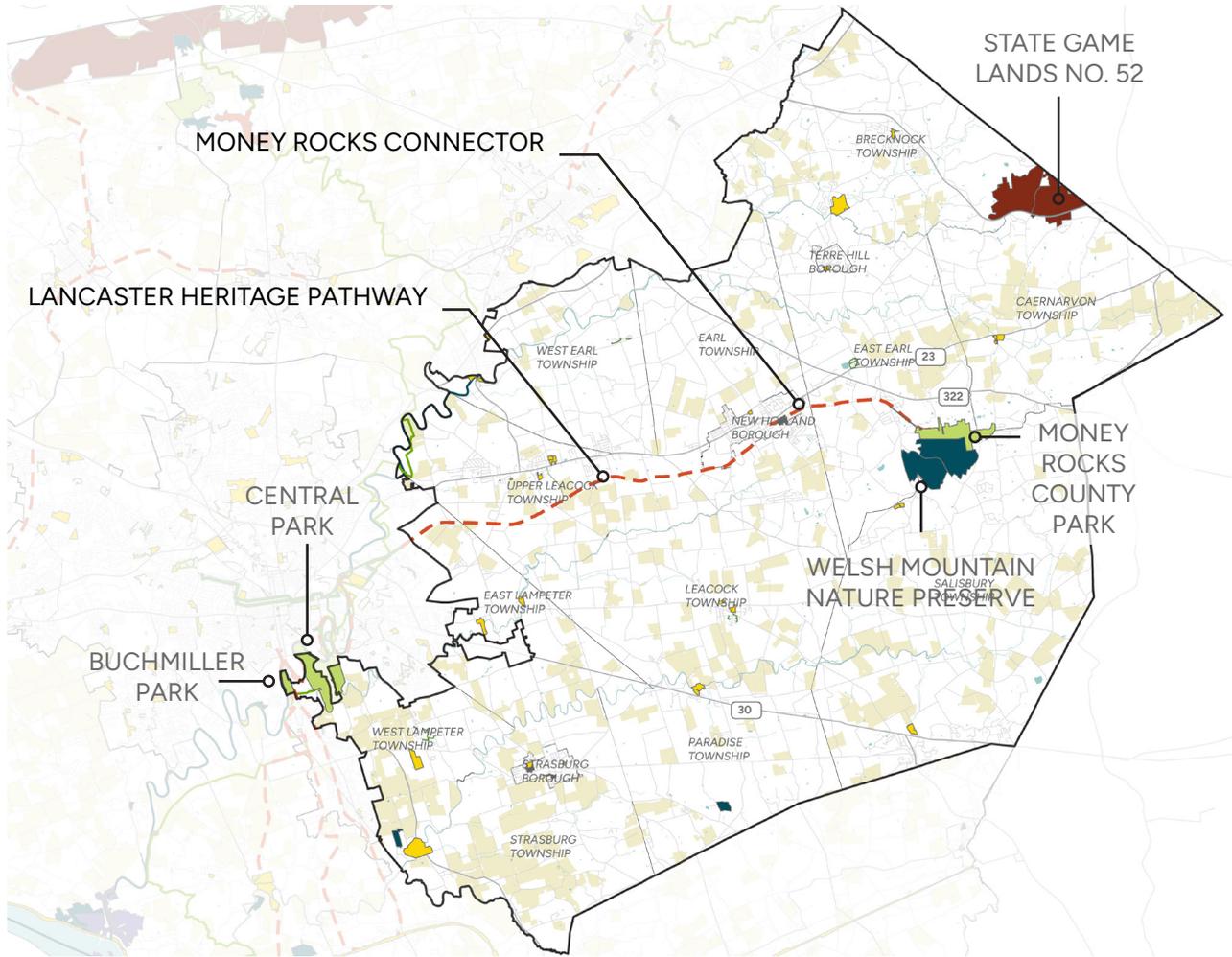
**Table 7.2: Northeast Planning Area Ownership Summary**

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>%</b>
PA Game Commission	22	5,794	77%
Local Municipalities	82	808	11%
Lancaster County	1	333	4%
Lancaster Conservancy	4	322	4%
PA Fish & Boat Commission	1	240	3%
Other	7	14	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,511</b>	

Source: Lancaster County.

- Support Denver Borough, East Cocalico Township, and Adamstown Borough in their effort to develop the alternative trail network identified in 2024 Warwick to Ephrata Rail Trail Extension Feasibility Study.
- Monitor the status of the Reading & Columbia Railroad corridor between Ephrata Borough, Denver Borough, and the County border and partner to pursue its acquisition if rail service is discontinued in the future.

# EAST PLANNING AREA



## PARK OWNERSHIP

- Lancaster County
- Bureau of State Parks/ Bureau of Forestry
- PA Fish & Boat
- Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)
- Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority
- PA Game Commission
- Lancaster Conservancy
- Local Municipalities
- Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, etc.)

## EXISTING TRAILS

- Trail
- Water Trail

## PROPOSED TRAILS

- Proposed Trail (Preferred)

- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Preserved Farmland
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road

Figure 7.3. East Planning Area Ownership, Parks, and Trails. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Implementation Opportunities

- Monitor the status of the Media Heights Golf Course and if it becomes available, pursue acquisition to connect Central and Buchmiller parks. Consider pursuing a right-of-first refusal from the current owners.
- Expand Money Rocks County Park where possible to meet the Level of Service goal for the planning area.
- Expand Lancaster Conservancy's Welsh Mountain Nature Preserve where possible.
- Discuss potential land swaps with the Lancaster Conservancy that would make maintenance and management sense for both entities.
- Expand State Game Lands No. 52 where possible.
- Extend the Lancaster Heritage Pathway on the Goat Path to Leola. Once that is achieved, seek to extend the trail further east to New Holland Borough.
- Connect Money Rocks County Park to New Holland Borough via the abandoned railroad line between them.
- Connect the Conestoga Greenway to the Lancaster Heritage Pathway, the proposed Sunnyside Nature Preserve, Central Park, the Correctional Facility Peninsula, and Buchmiller Park.
- Monitor the status of the abandoned railroad corridor north and south of Buchmiller Park and pursue its acquisition if it becomes available.

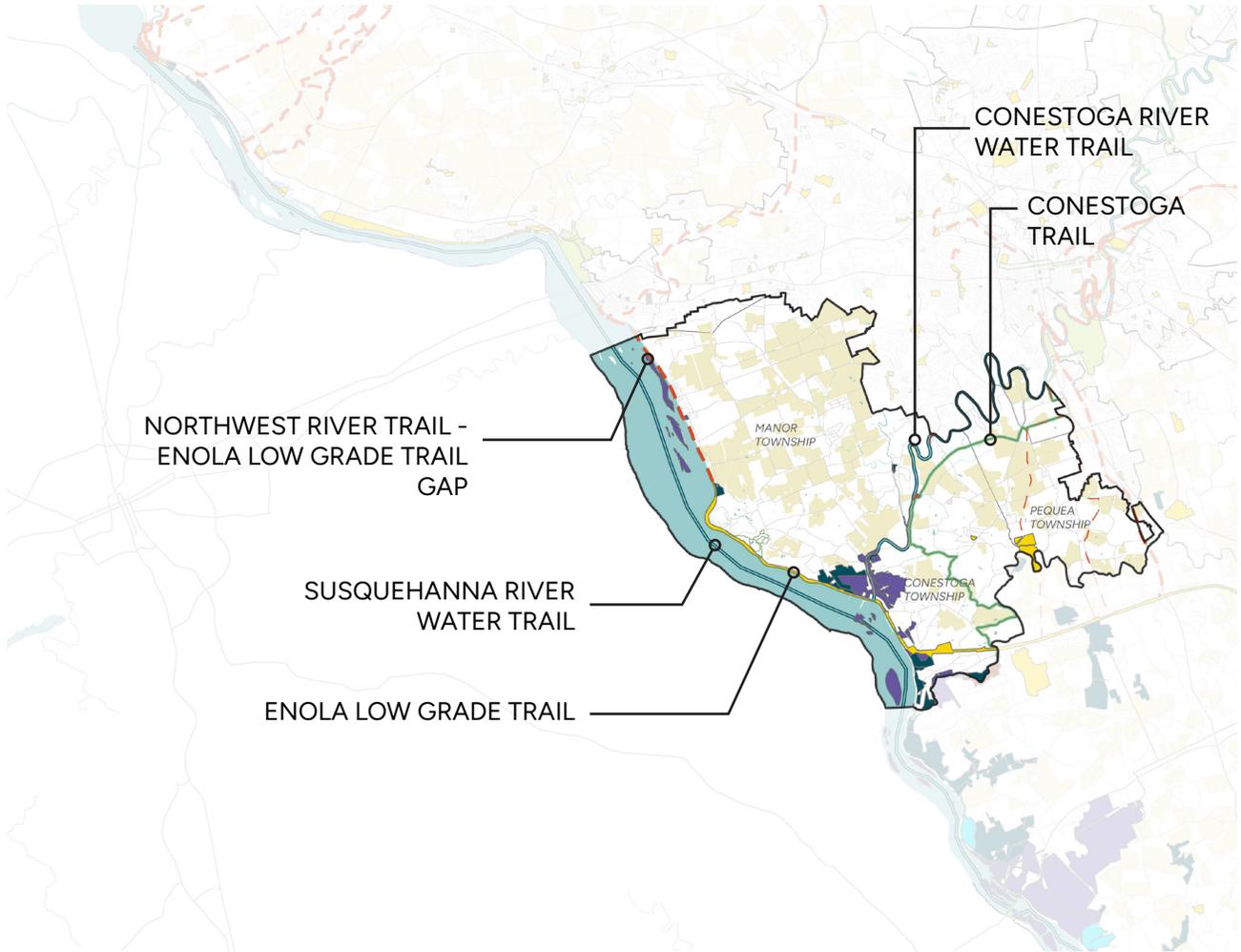
**Table 7.3: East Planning Area Ownership Summary**

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>%</b>
Lancaster Conservancy	4	1,369	44%
PA Game Commission	4	1,115	36%
Local Municipalities	31	518	17%
Lancaster County	1	391	13%
Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, Associations)	4	38	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,077</b>	

Source: Lancaster County.

- Monitor the status of the Narvon Mineral Products, Inc. clay mine adjacent to Money Rocks County Park and pursue acquisition if it becomes available. Note: The County has a six-month option agreement to purchase the property once notified by the owner of its availability.

# WEST PLANNING AREA



## PARK OWNERSHIP

- Lancaster County
- Bureau of State Parks/ Bureau of Forestry
- PA Fish & Boat
- Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)
- Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority
- PA Game Commission
- Lancaster Conservancy
- Local Municipalities
- Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, etc.)

## EXISTING TRAILS

- Trail
- Water Trail

## PROPOSED TRAILS

- Proposed Trail (Preferred)

- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Preserved Farmland
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road

Figure 7.4. West Planning Area Ownership, Parks, and Trails. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Implementation Opportunities

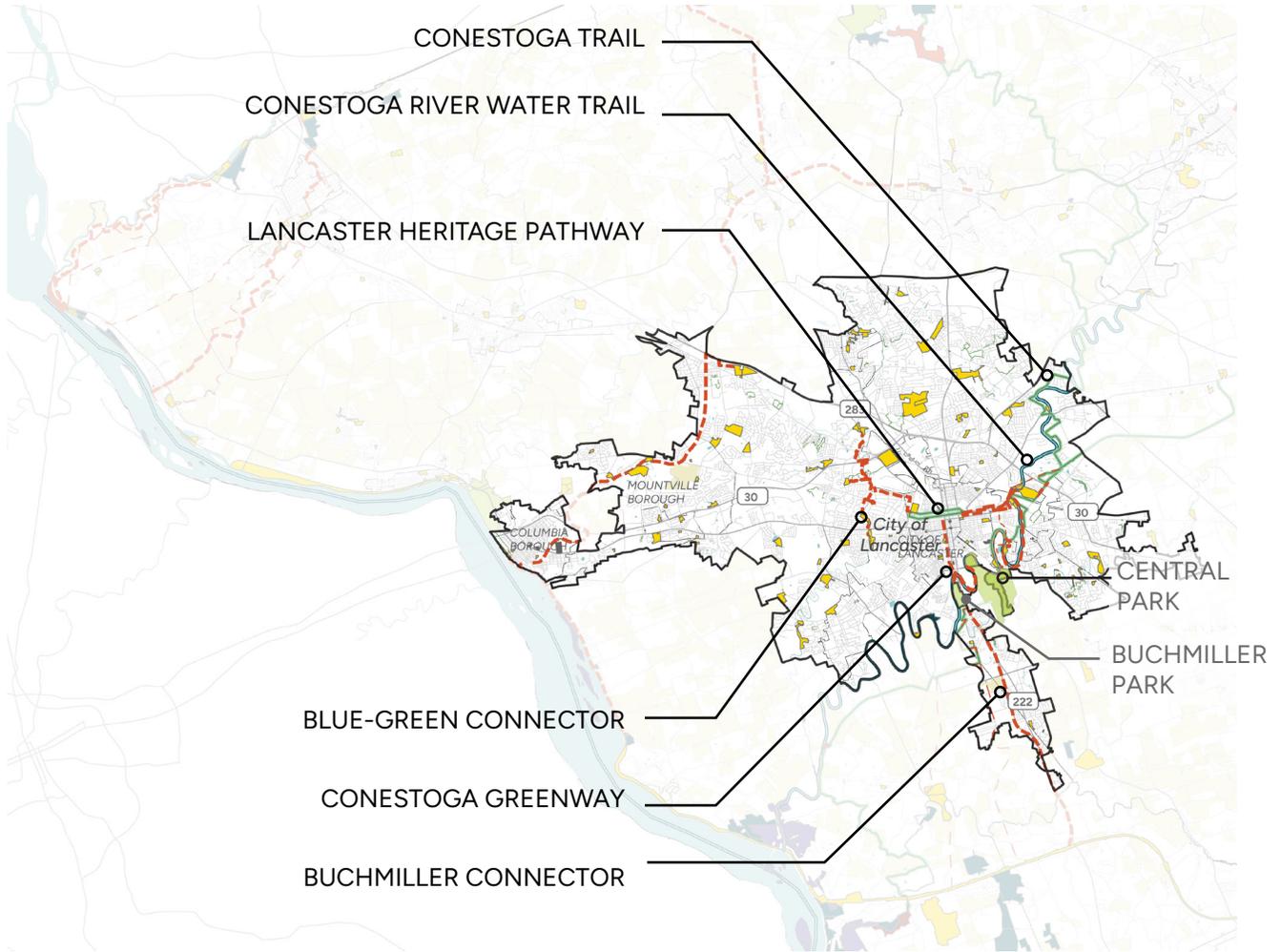
- Connect the Northwest River Trail and the Enola Low Grade Trail along Rt. 441 to close the gap between the two trails. (Manor Township, Columbia Borough)
- Develop a trail master plan for the Conestoga Trail to preserve existing off-road trail segments and relocate on-road trail segments where possible. (Lancaster Hiking Club, Manor Township)
- Preserve additional natural lands along the Enola Low Grade Trail, Susquehanna River, Conestoga River, and Pequea Creek where possible. (Lancaster Conservancy).
- Develop primitive campsites for thru paddlers on the Susquehanna River Water Trail. (Susquehanna National Heritage Area)
- Improve access areas to the Conestoga River Water Trail. (Conestoga River Club)

**Table 7.4: West Planning Area Ownership Summary**

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>%</b>
Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)	55	1,000	42%
Local Municipalities	8	739	31%
Lancaster Conservancy	13	417	18%
Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority	2	186	8%
PA Fish & Boat Commission	2	21	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,363</b>	

Source: Lancaster County.

# METRO PLANNING AREA



## PARK OWNERSHIP

- Lancaster County
- Bureau of State Parks/ Bureau of Forestry
- PA Fish & Boat
- Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)
- Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority
- PA Game Commission
- Lancaster Conservancy
- Local Municipalities
- Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, etc.)

## EXISTING TRAILS

- Trail
- Water Trail

## PROPOSED TRAILS

- Proposed Trail (Preferred)
- Proposed Trail (Alternate Route)

- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Preserved Farmland
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road

Figure 7.5. Metro Planning Area Ownership, Parks, and Trails. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Implementation Opportunities

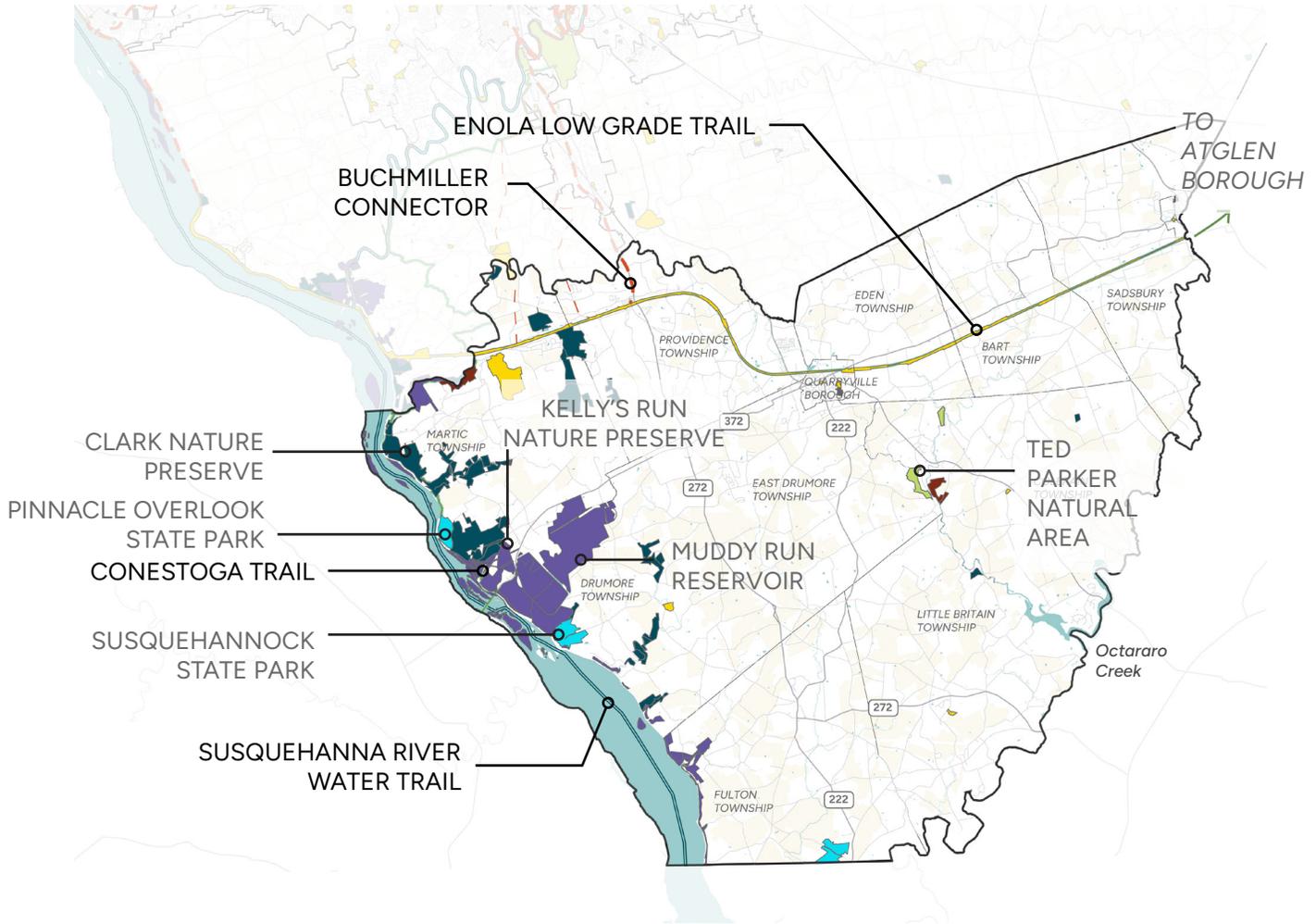
- Complete and connect the Little Conestoga Blue Green Connector and the Lancaster Heritage Pathway. (Steinman Foundation, East Hempfield Township, Manheim Township, City of Lancaster, Lancaster Township)
- Improve access areas along the Conestoga River Water Trail. (Conestoga River Club)
- Monitor the status of the abandoned railroad corridor that runs through Buchmiller Park and pursue acquisition if it becomes available. (Lancaster County)
- Rehabilitate the abandoned railroad bridge over the Conestoga River in Engleside if the abandoned railroad corridor is acquired. (City of Lancaster, Lancaster Township, West Lampeter Township, Lancaster County)
- Connect the Conestoga Greenway to the Lancaster Heritage Pathway, the proposed Sunnyside Nature Preserve, Central Park, the Correctional Facility Peninsula, and Buchmiller Park.
- Complete the proposed Environmental Center and 70-Acre Urban Nature Preserve on Sunnyside Peninsula (City of Lancaster, Partners for Environmental Stewardship)
- Complete the Water Street Bicycle and Pedestrian Boulevard (City of Lancaster)
- Evaluate the possibility of developing a side path adjacent to Rt. 272 to connect Buchmiller Park to the Enola Low Grade Trail. (Lancaster County, Pequea Township, West Lampeter Township, Providence Township)
- Monitor the status of the railroad corridor along Shawnee Run and pursue acquisition if it becomes available. Reevaluate the feasibility to develop a rail-with-trail along the active segment of the railroad line. (Columbia Borough)
- Evaluate the feasibility of developing segments of the abandoned Reading & Columbia Railroad Line to connect Columbia Borough to the Lancaster Junction Trail. (West Hempfield Township, Columbia Borough)
- Develop a trail master plan for the Conestoga Trail to preserve existing off-road trail segments and relocate on-road trail segments where possible. (Lancaster Hiking Club, Host Municipalities)
- Monitor the status of large parcels in the Metro Planning Area and evaluate their potential for park acquisition if they become available. (Lancaster County)
- Develop new and expand existing neighborhood and community park and trail opportunities in the Metro Planning Area to make up for the large Level of Service deficit. (Host Municipalities)

**Table 7.5: Metro Planning Area Ownership Summary**

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>%</b>
Local Municipalities	130	1,399	64%
Lancaster County	2	623	28%
Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority	1	74	3%
Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, Associations)	4	35	2%
Lancaster Conservancy	2	24	1%
Cemetery	1	32	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,192</b>	

Source: Lancaster County.

# SOUTH PLANNING AREA



## PARK OWNERSHIP

- Lancaster County
- Bureau of State Parks/ Bureau of Forestry
- PA Fish & Boat
- Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)
- Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority
- PA Game Commission
- Lancaster Conservancy
- Local Municipalities
- Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, etc.)

## EXISTING TRAILS

- Trail
- Water Trail

## PROPOSED TRAILS

- Proposed Trail (Preferred)
- Proposed Trail (Alternate Route)

- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Preserved Farmland
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road

Figure 7.6. South Planning Area Ownership, Parks, and Trails. Source: County and Municipal Boundary, Parks, Trails; PASDA. Roads, Highways, Railroads: US Census Bureau, 2025.

## Implementation Opportunities

- Expand Ted Parker County Park where possible to meet the Level of Service goal for the planning area. Connect the two disjointed properties through fee-simple purchases and easements where necessary.
- Partner with the Lancaster Conservancy in its efforts to preserve important natural lands along the Susquehanna River and in the northwest region of the planning area. Focus on lands that connect natural lands where possible.
- Discuss potential land swaps with the Lancaster Conservancy that would enhance management and maintenance efficiencies for both entities.
- Work with the PA Bureau of Forestry to preserve any unprotected Serpentine Barrens in southern Fulton Township.
- Monitor the status of utility lands along the Susquehanna River, such as those in the Muddy Run Area, and partner with the Lancaster Conservancy and PA Bureau of State Parks to pursue their acquisition if these lands become available.
- Monitor the status of lands owned by the Chester Municipal Authority adjacent to the Octoraro Reservoir. If those lands become available, they should be evaluated for outdoor recreation potential, and assist the appropriate entity in pursuing their acquisition.
- Work with the PA Bureau of State Parks to identify and pursue possible expansions of Pinnacle Overlook and Susquehannock state parks.
- Assist the Lancaster Conservancy and the Lancaster Hiking Club in securing the protection of the remaining vulnerable sections of the Conestoga Trail, south of the Enola Low Grade Trail.
- Assist Sadsbury Township in the completion of the final section of the Enola Low Grade Trail.
- Work with Chester County to extend the Enola Low Grade Trail to Atglen Borough and the Chester Valley Trail.
- Work with the Susquehanna National Heritage Area and utility company to designate primitive overnight campsites for thru paddlers on the Lower Susquehanna River Water Trail.
- Work with the Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority to expand outdoor recreation opportunities along the Susquehanna River whenever possible.
- Work with the Lancaster Conservancy to explore the potential of creating a water trail on the Octoraro Creek.

**Table 7.6: South Planning Area Ownership Summary**

Owner	Parcels	Acreage	%
Utilities (Safe Harbor Water Power Co./ PPL/ Exelon)	97	3,956	44%
Lancaster Conservancy	25	3261	36%
Local Municipalities	15	1,080	12%
Commonwealth of PA/ State Parks	3	362	4%
PA Game Commission	3	178	2%
Lancaster County	2	134	1%
Various Nonprofits (Lions Clubs, Associations)	2	24	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>8,995</b>	

Source: Lancaster County.