Chapter 8 PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

The City's resident surveys and public workshops show that Newark residents value the City's parks and open space highly for enhancing the attractiveness of neighborhoods and view its recreation programs an essential service. Parks, recreation programs, and open space provide a diverse and quantifiable range of benefits that immeasurably improve residents' quality of life and support Newark's vision of a "Healthy, Sustainable, and Inclusive" community.

Healthy Community: Parks, recreation, and open space provide residents and visitors with both active and passive recreational opportunities, which promote a healthy lifestyle, fight obesity, and prevent chronic conditions that lead to coronary disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Strong evidence shows that people are more likely to exercise if they are in close proximity to a park. According to GIS analysis from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), most Newark residents live within a ten-minute walk of a park. (See Map 8-1, which shows walking time to active recreation sites located in Newark as of 2016. Since the development of this study, the City has converted the property at 151 Forest Lane – formerly the location of Rodney Dormitory – to convert it to an additional 7.24 acres of parkland and improving access of parkland to the Oakland neighborhood and central Newark.)

Sustainable Community — **Environmental:** Newark's parks and open space keep our living surroundings healthy and provide essential green space in a developed community. They serve as groundwater-recharge areas, floodplain protection, natural sound barriers, and stormwater protection from wetlands. Abundant trees and vegetation reduce the "heat-island effect" and carbon emissions. Furthermore, the network of parks in our City, as well as in New Castle County and the region, provides an important wildlife habitat that protects numerous indigenous and migratory wildlife species, fosters enjoyment, and provides educational opportunities for people to observe and coexist with wildlife.

Sustainable Community — Economic: Numerous studies show that residential areas in close proximity to a park have increased property values and a higher tax base. The availability of recreation opportunities and park amenities is an important quality-of-life factor for businesses choosing where to locate and for individuals choosing where to live. Furthermore, the City's parks and trails, specifically the James Hall and Pomeroy Trails, and the City's close proximity to numerous mountain-biking trails provide tremendous opportunity for "recreational tourism," which benefits our shops, hotels, and restaurants.

Inclusive Community: Parks encourage social interaction in a community or neighborhood. They are a place to meet, socialize, relax, and play for children, teenagers, college students, and young and older adults. Park amenities include playgrounds, bicycle and walking trails, skateboard parks, baseball fields, and basketball and tennis courts. Newark's recreational programs provide a diverse range of enjoyable, structured activities for people of all ages and abilities, including sports, dance, crafts, social activities, and community events.

Land Use Planning for Parks and Open Space

The City's Zoning Code and Subdivision Development Regulations provisions of land dedication of areas for active and passive recreation have helped the City of Newark Parks and Recreation Department meet the objective of providing recreational lands for new residential developments. Based on these regulations, each development is evaluated by the Parks and Recreation Department for adequate provision of space for active and passive recreation. Depending on the size and scope of the project, the Department may recommend that the City's "cash in lieu of land" Subdivision and Development Regulations provision be utilized. This alternative open-space requirement means that in some cases, a developer may pay an impact fee when its sites do not contain lands appropriate for active recreational facilities.

The City's long-term policy of requesting that 100-year-floodplain stream-valley land dedications (where applicable) accompany development projects also has added significantly to the City's stock of acreage for passive recreation along the White Clay and Christina Creeks. Most significantly, in 1990, Newark residents approved a request from the Mayor and City Council to issue bonds for the purchase of lands for active and passive open space. As a result, the City eventually purchased 77.56 acres of open space (a considerable portion of which was under threat of development) at a total cost of \$3,193,012. These land acquisitions added to the City's inventory of open-space acreage for active and passive recreation (See Table 8-1 which shows the City's current open-space inventory). Regarding certain privately held portions of the Christina Creek and White Clay Creek stream valleys, the City has pursued land dedication of these areas to add to Newark's open-space landholdings.

In 2018, City residents voted to approve a bond referendum funding the purchase of the former 7.24-acre Rodney dorm location through the State's revolving loan fund. Working with residents through a series of public workshops, the city developed a plan that included walking paths, landscaping, natural playground area, a grass field for passive recreation, a stormwater management facility, and an accessible fishing pier. The project was completed in the Winter of 2021 and named Hillside Park. In addition, the Old Paper Mill Park property is included in the City's Capital Improvements program for development as an active-recreation park to serve the residents of Newark in the coming years, presuming funding availability and continued Council approval through the budget process.

In addition, regarding stream-valley preservation and protection, the City will continue to rely on DNREC and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's 1993 *Upper Christina River: Floodplain Management Study* and the National Parks Service's 2000 *White Clay Creek and its Tributaries: Watershed Management Plan* for guidance and technical assistance, if and when development projects are proposed near these creeks. These documents are, therefore, incorporated by reference into this *Comprehensive Development Plan V*.

The City may be faced with important decisions regarding the availability of a large indoor space (gymnasium) for recreational activities because of the continued decline in the availability of local School District and University facilities for City indoor recreation.

City of Newark
Walksheds for Active Recreation Sites nicipal Boundary Only) Middle Run Valley Natural Area White Clay Creek State Park Legend City of Newark Major Roads State and County Parks 0.5 **Active Recreation Facilities** 5 Minute Service Area Method of Travel Newark Population Served % of Newark (3.0 mph walk) (2010 Census) **Population Served** 10 Minute Service Area 5 Minute Service Area 10 Minute Service Area 18,772 60%

Map 8-1: City of Newark - "Walksheds" to Active Recreation Sites

Map 8-2: Publicly Owned and Managed Parks and Open Spaces

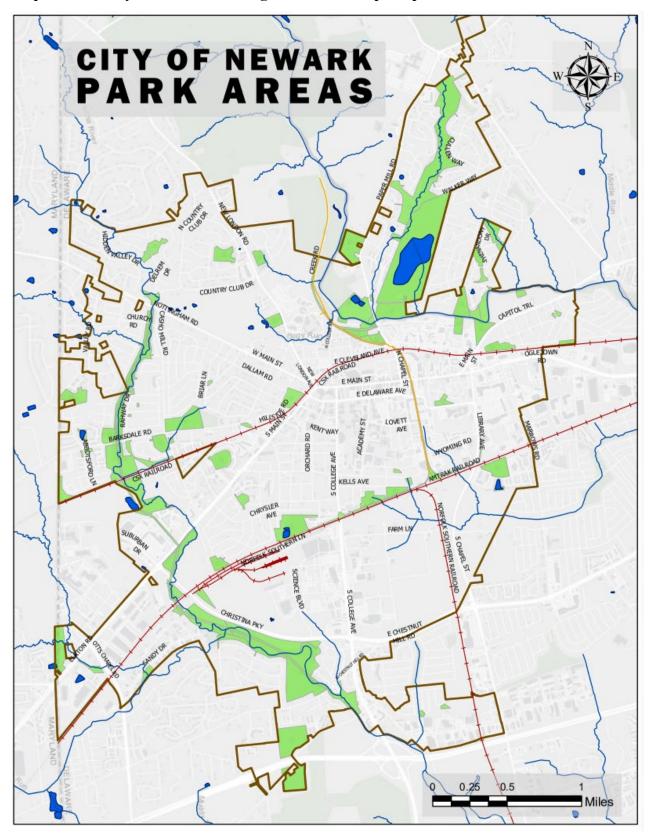


Table 8-1: Publicly Owned and Managed Parks and Open Spaces

| Due | a out. | Classification | | Estimated Forested |
|----------|---|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Property | | Classification | Acreage | Acre(s) |
| 1 | Alley, Douglas D. | Park (Active) | 0.9 | 0.4 |
| 2 | Apple Road & Barksdale Road | Open Space | 0.6 | 0.0 |
| 3 | Barksdale Estates | Open Space | 5.3 | 5.0 |
| 4 | Briar & Bent Christina Valley Stream | Open Space | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| 5 | Christina Valley Stream Conservation Area | Open Space (Passive) | 137.54 | 137.14 |
| 6 | Clark, Orville | White Clay Valley Stream | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| 7 | Coleman (includes Briar Creek) | Park (Passive) | 8.57 | 8.27 |
| 8 | Country Hills Pond | Open Space | 2.3 | 0.0 |
| 9 | Courtney Street | Open Space | 1.6 | 0.0 |
| 10 | Coverdale, William M. | Park (Passive) | 16.8 | 14.8 |
| 11 | Creek Bend | Open Space | 6.1 | 5.5 |
| 12 | Curtis Paper Mill | Park(Passive) | 7.0 | 4.6 |
| 13 | Devon | Park (Active) | 4.6 | 3.0 |
| 14 | Dickey, Edna C. | Park (Active) | 8.2 | 0.0 |
| 15 | Elkton Road & Parkway | Open Space | 9.6 | 6.0 |
| 16 | Elan | Park (Active) | 6.7 | 5.9 |
| 17 | Fairfield | Park (Active) | 7.0 | 0.0 |
| 18 | Fairfield Crest | Park (Active) | 3.7 | 0.7 |
| 19 | Folk Memorial | Park (Active/Passive) | 34.6 | 28.5 |
| 20 | Handloff, Norma B. | Park (Active) | 15.8 | 0.25 |
| 21 | Hidden Valley | Park (Active/Passive) | 6.5 | 2.0 |
| 22 | Hill, LeRoy C., Jr. | Park (Active) | 6.3 | 1.3 |
| 23 | Iron Glen | Park (Passive) | 12.4 | 7.0 |
| 24 | James F. Hall Trail | Greenway | 7.62 | 3.0 |
| 25 | Karpinski | Park (Passive) | 8.0 | 2.25 |
| 26 | Kells | Park (Active) | 5.2 | 0.0 |
| 27 | Kershaw | Park (Active) | 3.8 | 2.0 |
| 28 | Laura's Glen | Open Space | 1.59 | 1.0 |
| 29 | Lewis | Park (Active) | 4.2 | 1.5 |
| 30 | Lumbrook | Park (Active) | 5.9 | 2.25 |
| 31 | Miller, Dorothy | Open Space | 7.2 | 6.7 |
| 32 | Newark Reservoir | Reservoir Site | 113.0 | 4.0 |
| 33 | Old Paper Mill Road | Park (Passive) | 12.3 | 0.7 |
| 34 | Paper Mill Falls | White Clay Valley Stream | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| 35 | Paper Mill Rd. & Old Paper Mill Rd. | Open Space | 0.5 | 0.5 |

| | | | | Estimated Forested |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Prop | erty | Classification | Acreage | Acre(s) |
| 36 | Park Place (next to apartments) | Open Space | 1.4 | 0.5 |
| 37 | Park Place East | Open Space | 1.2 | 0.07 |
| 38 | Phillips | Park (Active/Passive) | 13.7 | 5.5 |
| 39 | Rahway | Park (Active) | 0.9 | 0.3 |
| 40 | Rahway (945) | Open Space | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| 41 | Rahway (968) | Open Space | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| 42 | Read, George | Park (Active) | 2.8 | 0.0 |
| 43 | Redd, William M., Jr. | Park (Passive) | 68.5 | 64.5 |
| 44 | Ridgewood Glen | Open Space | 12.4 | 10.75 |
| 45 | Rittenhouse | Park (Active/Passive) | 45.9 | 43.0 |
| 46 | South Well Field | Open Space | 4.3 | 4.3 |
| 47 | Stafford | Park (Active) | 1.8 | 0.0 |
| 48 | Sue Lane | Open Space | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| 49 | Thomas, Olan R. | Park (Passive) | 4.3 | 0.4 |
| 50 | White Chapel (Incl. 1/2 NSC Site) | Park (Active) | 13.0 | 7.0 |
| 51 | Wilson, George M. | Park/Center (Active) | 4.8 | 0.0 |
| 52 | Wyncliff | Open Space | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| 53 | Hillside Park | Park (Active/Passive) | 7.24 | 0.4 |

Total (Acres) 660.46 397.48

As reflected in Table 8-1, approximately 60% of City-owned and -managed parks and open space is forested.

Urban Forest Management

In 2000, the City was designated a "Tree City USA" by the National Arbor Day Foundation, sponsored in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. In addition, in 2015, the Parks and Recreation Department had a citywide tree inventory completed to provide Newark with an up-to-date picture of the City of Newark's tree population. Based on this information, the Parks Department is working to diversify Newark's urban tree canopy in two ways: first, with its own forestry projects, and second, the Parks and Recreation and Planning and Development Departments work



with developers of new subdivisions to ensure compliance with the City's detailed existing tree preservation, tree planting, and landscaping requirements.

In 2018, the Delaware Forest Service completed a study of the Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) for each of the 57 municipalities in Delaware. The study determined that Newark's UTC covered

approximately 33% of the city, up from 25% in 2008. According to the U.S. and Delaware Forest Services, a healthy percentage of tree cover within an urban area should be a minimum of 30%. Back in 2010, Newark had agreed to take part in the pilot program and set a goal of attaining 30% tree cover by the year 2021. In ten years, Newark surpassed that goal and is committed to increasing its tree canopy whenever possible.

In 2018, the City was recognized as a "Sterling Community" by the National Arbor Day Foundation for achieving the "Tree City USA Growth Award" seventeen years in a row.

Aesthetics

The City has a variety of regulatory tools and programs to improve Newark's overall physical attractiveness. These include a detailed landscape ordinance that provides for the preservation of large trees within proposed subdivisions, street trees along new residential subdivision roadways, substantial screening that separates residential from commercial properties, landscaping between businesses and along business frontages, landscaping on the perimeters of parking areas and landscaped islands with trees within the parking area, and maintenance of landscaping once installed. In addition, the City's award-winning beautification program and the Parks and Recreation Department's ongoing road-median and traffic-island beautification program have dramatically improved Newark's main arteries for the better. Its once barren and unsightly state highways and intersections are now attractive gateways to Newark. These oases of green and bursts of in-season flowers help make visiting and living in Newark a visual treat for newcomers and, because the program is so successful and has become such a normal part of our Newark "landscape," it has at times been taken for granted.

City of Newark Parks and Regional Trails

There are 17.06 miles of trails within the City of Newark, (See Table 8-2). Moreover, there are more than 85 miles of trails in the Newark region, including those in nearby county and state parks (See Map 8-3). The network consists of trails designed with single-track natural surfaces, crushed stone, and asphalt surfaces. The trails serve as active recreation facilities as well as transportation links that connect residential neighborhoods, city, county, and state parks, University of Delaware facilities and student housing, and Downtown Newark and area



shopping and business centers. Combined with its expansive sidewalk system and bike lanes on many roadways, the region's trails provide an extensive non-motorized transportation network in and around Newark. The James F. Hall Trail and Pomeroy and Newark Rail Trail have been designated as National Preservation Trails by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In 2019, the City added the 0.32-mile Pomeroy Trail Connector the connects Fremont Road in Fairfield Crest to the Pomeroy Trail entrance along Creek Road. This addition created another important connection for the Newark community and our trail network.

Table 8-2: Trails in Newark Parks (Updated)

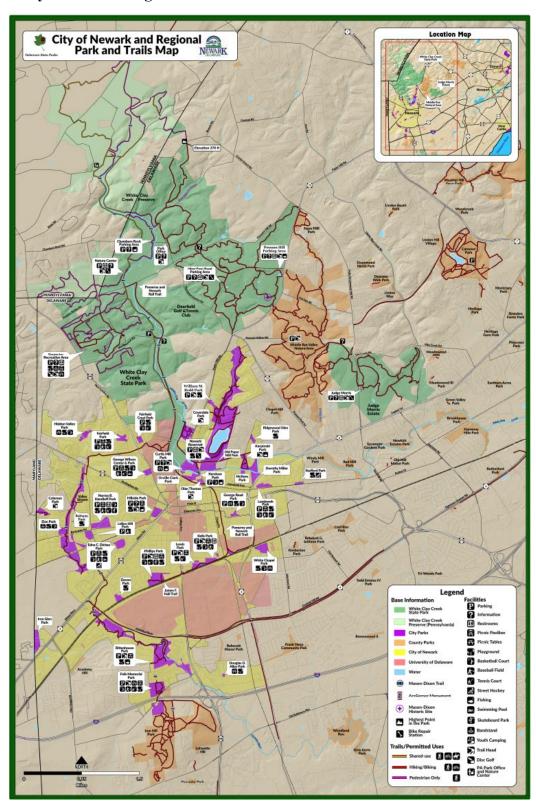
| | Distance (Miles) |
|--|---------------------|
| Alley Park | 0.1 |
| Christina Valley Stream (Persimmon Creek Swim Club to Nottingham Rd.) | 4.08 |
| Coleman Park | 0.25 |
| Coverdale Park | 0.70 |
| Folk Park | 0.41 |
| Hillside Park | 0.32 |
| James F. Hall Trail | 1.76 |
| Iron Glen Park | 0.43 |
| Karpinski Park | 0.43 |
| Kershaw Park | 0.13 |
| Phillips Park | 0.35 |
| Pomeroy and Newark | 1.60 |
| Pomeroy Connector | 0.32 |
| Redd Park | 2.47 |
| Reservoir Site | 2.08 |
| Rittenhouse Park (West Chestnut Hill Rd. to Persimmon Creek Swim Club) | 1.95 |
| Total (Miles) | 17.06 |

Newark Outdoor Recreation Demand and Priorities

In 2017, the Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation did a statewide telephone survey as part of the development of the 2018 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan. Key findings from residents in Newark and the Newark region who participated in the survey include the following:

- 83% of Newark respondents indicated that outdoor recreation is very important or somewhat important to them personally. This percentage was the highest compared to other municipalities.
- 55% of Delaware respondents stated that the most important reason they participated in outdoor recreation activities was for their physical fitness. Other popular reasons included being with family and friends (24%), relaxation and well-being (41%), being close to nature and scenery (35%) and enjoying the scenery (14%).
- 49% of respondents wanted outdoor facilities/opportunities close to home.
- 24% of respondents desired more opportunities to participate in organized activities.
- The most popular activities for Newark residents are walking or jogging (82%), swimming at a beach (77%), visiting historic sites (76%) and hiking (70%),

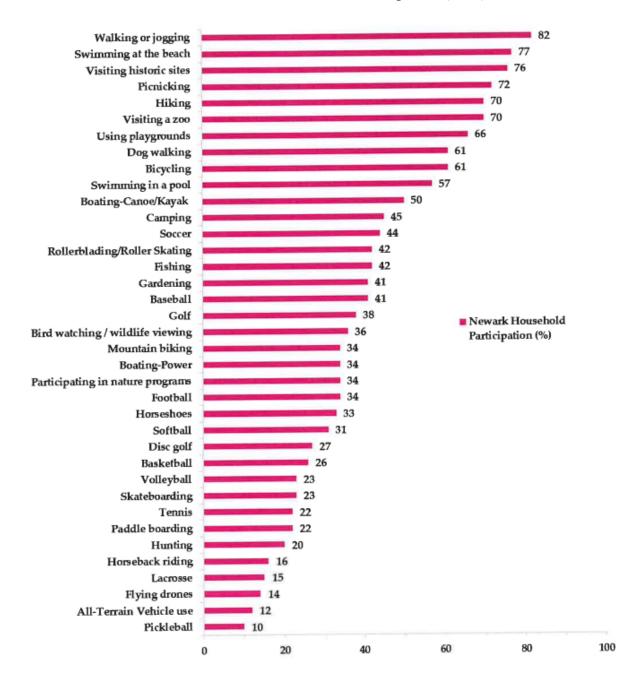
Results for Newark from the 2018 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan are shown in **Chart** 8-1. The complete is available online: SCORP - Delaware State Parks (destateparks.com)



Map 8-3: City of Newark Regional Parks and Trails

Please refer to the link below for an interactive map, information on park locations, and facilities contained within each park: http://cityofnewarkde.us/index.aspx?NID=165

Chart 8-1: Newark Household Outdoor Recreation Participation (2018)



Newark Community Events

The Newark Parks and Recreation Department fosters community engagement by a variety of community events throughout the year.

Winter/Spring

- Winterfest
- Egg Hunt
- Memorial Day Parade
- Spring Clean-Up
- Spring Concert Series

Spring/Summer

Parks on Draft







Summer/Fall

- Fourth of July Fireworks
- Community Day
- Fall Community Clean-Up
- Fall Flea Markets
- Halloween Parade and Trick-or-Treat on Main Street
- Thanksgiving Day Breakfast
- Turkey Trot



George Wilson Center

The George Wilson Center and Park, located at 303 New London Road (across from Clayton Hall), is one of Newark's historical buildings. It originally served as the community's only segregated school for kindergarten to eighth grade from 1922–1958. (After eighth grade during those years, the City's African American residents had to travel to Howard High School in Wilmington). The building became a community center named after George Wilson, the first elected African American councilman, and is preserved by the City's Parks and Recreation Department to serve the community as a



gathering place. The facility and park offer a wide variety of recreational activities as well as a multipurpose meeting space. Amenities include lighted basketball and tennis court, a youth baseball (T-ball) field, a swimming pool, a picnic pavilion, playground equipment, picnic tables, and a horseshoe pit. The center is open seven days a week and is available to be rented for family or group outings such as wedding receptions, graduation parties, meetings, and training sessions.

Recreation Programs

The City of Newark Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide range of recreation programs at a reasonable cost to participants. Fee assistance is available for participants from low- to moderate-income households, funded through the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the James F. Hall Scholarship fund. Programs areas include the following:

Arts — **Performance and Visual:** Includes youth dance classes, drawing, painting, pottery classes for all ages, and theatre/acting classes.

Fitness and Adult Leagues: Includes leagues or classes for volleyball, basketball, softball, yoga, and Zumba.

Before- and After-School Care: Available for students at Downes and West Park Elementary Schools.

Sports and Aquatics: Includes classes in archery, swimming, soccer, skateboarding, basketball and tennis.

Community Garden: The Newark Community Garden took root in 2015 at Fairfield Park to offer a variety of gardening opportunities for individuals and families. Services provided includes the initial grading of the garden area, water sources, composting facilities, tool shed, and an ADA-accessible 10' × 4' garden plot.

More information on these programs can be obtained at www.newarkde.gov/play









Plan Goals and Action Items: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Ensure abundant safe, attractive, and well-maintained city parks, trails, and indoor recreation facilities for active and passive recreation opportunities and protect natural areas, all of which enhance the community's quality of life and sense of place.

Strategic Issues:

- Parks and recreation programs catering to diverse ages, interests, and abilities.
- > Maintaining existing park amenities.
- > Connectivity, safety, and accessibility of City parks and trails.
- > City beautification and preservation of the natural environment.

Community Vision: Healthy/Active and Sustainable

Goal 1 | Create healthy and active opportunities in the Newark community.

Provide opportunities for Newark residents to live a healthy lifestyle by updating and maintaining active areas in our parks.

Action Item 1

Continue to update the aging park system with new walkable trails and maintaining the existing hiking trails. Enhance active, safe opportunities for residents to get outside and by following new trends such as pickle ball, gaga pits and active playground areas for children.

Participating agencies:

City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation

Community Vision: Healthy/Active and Inclusive

| Goal 2 | Expand the accessibility and appeal of Newark's parks a | nd recreational |
|--------|---|-----------------|
| | programs. | |

Newark's parks advance the City's vision as an "Inclusive Community" by offering amenities that appeal to residents and visitors of various ages, diverse interests, and varying abilities. For example, the newly developed Hillside Park project includes a more adventuresome play area that will include climbing ropes and a 24' slide. We also have Preston's Playground, Newark's first all-inclusive playground where children of all abilities can play together.

Action Item 2

Improve connectivity of City parks to other city parks and to the surrounding county and state parks. Enhanced connectivity improves access to the City's parks and expands their potential user base. For example, the James F. Hall Trail and Pomeroy Trail connect several small parks, which creates more exposure to the variety of park facilities. The City added the 0.32-mile Pomeroy Trail Connector that connects Fremont Road in Fairfield Crest to the Pomeroy Trail entrance along Creek Road. This addition created another important connection for the Newark Community and our trail network. Similar benefits could be achieved by improved wayfinding signage and mapping.

2022 Update: In 2021, the Charles Emerson Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge was completed. The 194-foot long, 12-foot wide bridge is located along Paper Mill Road as it crosses the White Clay Creek south of Curtis Mill Park. It sits adjacent to the vehicular bridge that crosses the creek. The bridge also provides a more efficient and safer connection to the Newark Reservoir and Old Paper Mill Road Park.



Participating agencies:

City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation City of Newark Department of Planning and Development State of Delaware Division of State Parks and Recreation New Castle County Department of Community Services

Action Item 3

Increase the number of outdoor recreation facilities that are compliant with ADA regulations.

2022 Update: The City of Newark has increased outdoor recreation facilities that are compliant with ADA regulations with the creation of both Preston's Playground, Newark's first all-inclusive playground, and the recently developed Hillside Park, with improved accessibility at the playground.

Participating agencies:

City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation

Action Item 4

Work with school districts and state partners to enhance the "Safe Routes to School" program.

The Delaware Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) works with elementary and middle schools to make it safe, convenient and fun for children to walk or bicycle to school. SRTS identifies the safest routes from children's homes to their schools and identifies safety concerns along the routes for local agencies to investigate and determine potential improvement measures. Map 8-4 shows that approximately 440 Newark students between the ages of 5 to 9 live within a 15-minute walk to school.

2022 Update: WILMAPCO Safe Routes to School Program, working with community partners such as Downes Elementary, DelDOT, BikeNewark, the City of Newark, create safe, convenient, and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from school. Recent developments include a "road diet" along Casho Mill Road that created buffered bicycle lanes to Downes Elementary. In addition, work has begun in 2022 to create a "cycle-track" (two-way bicycle lane) along Delaware Avenue connecting Newark's existing bicycle network to Newark High School.



Participating agencies:

City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation City of Newark Department of Planning and Development BikeNewark Christina School District

Action Item 5

Continue progress on park development and the master plan for Old Paper Mill Road Park property. In 2018, City residents voted to approve a bond referendum funding the purchase of the former 7.24-acre Rodney dorm location through the State's revolving loan fund. Working with residents through a series of public workshops, the City developed a plan through the public process that included walking paths, landscaping, natural playground area, a grass field for passive recreation and an accessible fishing pier. The project was completed in the fall of 2021. The Old Paper Mill Park property is included in the City's Capital Improvements program for development as an active-recreation park to serve the residents of Newark in the coming years, presuming funding availability and continued Council approval through the budget process.

Participating agencies:

City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation City of Newark Public Works Department Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson, Inc.

Community Vision: Sustainable

Goal 3 Enhance the City's natural environment by using the City parks and open space to preserve natural areas and wildlife habitat.

The City's parks and open space represent a key opportunity to advance the City's vision as an environmentally "Sustainable Community" by preserving our natural environment and wildlife habitats. Policy recommendations include:

- Explore policies and regulations that preserve open spaces for larger undeveloped parcels.
- Continue reforestation efforts in park land and open space areas.

2022 Update: In 2021, City Council adopted the Tree Ordnance Committee's recommendations to amend Chapter 32: Zoning; Article XXV - Landscape Screening and Treatment. The ordinance will help increase tree canopy coverage.

Action Item 6

Exceed the Delaware Forest Services' Urban Tree Canopy of 33%.

Newark achieved an Urban Tree Canopy of 33% in 2018. The Delaware Forest Service completed a study of the Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) for each of the 57 municipalities in Delaware. The study determined that Newark's UTC covered approximately 33% of the city, up from 25% in 2008. According to the U.S. and Delaware Forest Services, a healthy percentage of tree cover within an urban area should be a minimum of 30%.

Participating agencies:

City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation Delaware State Forest Service

Action Item 7

Develop a policy for a 100-foot vegetated buffer zone from all wetlands, waterbodies, and waterways in City Parkland, including the removing invasive plants in the buffer zone and replace with native plants.

Notes:

1. *SelectUSA*, 2011.