

Friends of Glen Providence Park
Response to Long-Range Park Ideas & Concepts for Glen Providence Park
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We appreciate the time and thought that is being put into these long-term plans for Delaware County's parks. Our History & Nature Committee met to discuss the ideas and concepts presented for Glen Providence Park. We agree with many of the proposals made, but there are two that we would not support, and we have some questions on others.

The two most significant changes proposed are to divert Broomall's Run through the pond, and to build an additional parking lot on Kirk Lane. Based on what we have learned, we disagree with these two proposals.

Diverting Broomall's Run through the pond

We have talked several times with Penncrest High School Science Department Coordinator Ed Somers, who has studied the pond for decades. He is opposed to the idea of re-routing the stream through the pond: *"A pond is a pond for a reason. Running a creek through it changes the entire makeup of the body of water and converts it back to a creek."*

Harmful to pond and stream ecology:

- It is our understanding that the proposal would be detrimental to the stream and pond ecology, and to the organisms that inhabit them.
- In the stretch of Broomall's Run that would be filled in, species include Northern Water Snakes, fish, and crayfish (which is a positive "indicator species" of good stream health); and a variety of bird species bathe in and drink from the stream.
- Many amphibians lay eggs at the pond, which would not be sustained with the full stream flowing through it, including: Bullfrogs, Pickerel Frogs, Green Frogs and American Toads. The pond hosts at least 4 turtle species: Painted, Musk, Snapping, and invasive Red-eared Sliders. Numerous other pond species include fish, fishing spiders, dragonflies, and muskrats. It is watching these pond species that make the pond such an attraction for many children and adults.

Damaging to the park, expense and maintenance:

- The extensive construction to fill in and divert Broomall's Run would damage the surrounding area. It would take years for the area to recover with plantings.
- A dam would need to be constructed and maintained, and dam failure would endanger houses downstream.
- Such a small pond would not have the capacity to hold the volume of water in Broomall's Run during heavy rain events. We fear this would cause repeated flooding at the pond, and further destruction of pond ecology.
- It would be a huge, expensive job to divert and fill in Broomall's Run, and we feel it would be a better use of resources to find other solutions to the erosion and maintenance issues.
- The park was donated to be kept as natural as possible for plants and wildlife. This proposal would sacrifice Broomall's Run, a natural part of the park, to save a man-made pond- but as indicated, we do not think it would actually save the pond.

Alternative strategies for the pond and stream:

While we would like to preserve the historic pond, which was built by the WPA in 1936, and is a central and beloved attraction in the park, we believe that more gentle measures should be implemented and given time to have effect before any drastic measures are taken.

- The flow of water into and out of the pond could be planned, controlled, and monitored, with signage posted to prevent individuals from trying to tinker with the intake and outlet. In recent years, well-meaning individuals have changed the flow of both, with detrimental effects on the pond ecology.
- There could be extensive planting of appropriate erosion-controlling native plants along the stream, and in and along the pond.
- Rock could be added to select locations where needed along the stream to control erosion.
- Uphill sources of runoff could be addressed, particularly at the sledding hill and behind the medical offices on State Street.
- Aeration of the pond could be increased through rehabilitation of the Butler waterfall.
- Add signage prohibiting the taking or releasing of plants/wildlife.
- Remove invasive Red-eared Sliders from the pond.

Kirk Lane parking:

We believe an additional parking lot at Kirk Lane is unnecessary, and would further damage the park.

- This would encroach into the existing open space in the park, damaging the park by clearing trees and re-grading.
- It would create a dangerous pullout along a busy road at the crest of a hill.
- Based on Susan Harrington's monitoring of the lot, and previous observations, we have not found more than a few cars parked in the existing lot (except for a neighborhood party), making additional parking unnecessary.
- In fact we have not seen parking full at any of the 3 entrances to the park, as the majority of park users walk to the park.
- Lines could be painted in the existing lot to optimize parking.

The next two most significant changes proposed are a Children's Play Area and an ADA accessible terrace. We are interested in more information on these proposals.

Children's Natural Play Area:

We are not opposed to a Natural Play Area, and the examples sent by Tim Wilson are appealing. But we do not think this is necessary, as children have so much fun exploring the pond, stream and trails, in imaginative play and looking for wildlife. A play area would require maintenance and could create liability issues. It seems that funding could be better spent elsewhere in the park. If a play area was created, we would hope it could be done in a way that would not harm any current natural area of the park- possible alternate locations are the sledding hill or grassy area near the Kirk Lane entrance.

ADA Accessible Terrace at main entrance:

We would like to learn more about this plan. We appreciate that the park is not ADA accessible, but we are not sure how a terrace would work with the terrain of the main entrance, and we would not want to see the WPA-built flagstone walkway harmed. Possible alternatives are:

- Create a ramp to the current overlook at the main entrance- this already provides an excellent view.
- Include an overlook in the design of the 3rd Street Project at the 3rd & West entrance.
- The 3rd & Kirk entrance is a relatively flat area already, there could possibly be access to picnic tables near the entrance.

We support these needs, ideas & concepts, with some additional notes:

- Standardized park signage: including clear signs with the park name at each entrance.
- Trail maintenance standards: erosion control is needed on several sections of trails, and a boardwalk could be re-established through parts of the wetlands to minimize environmental impact.
- Restrooms: it would be wonderful if they could be repaired!
- Riparian and floodplain wetland naturalization and buffer: we think this is excellent and will greatly help with erosion, beautification, stream quality, and wildlife habitat.
- Erosion control: with appropriate native plantings wherever possible, and with thoughtful management of uphill areas.
- ADA provisions: see response to ADA accessible terrace
- Structure repairs & maintenance: including the stage, wall, pavilion, and footbridges, using WPA style materials including flagstone. In cases where flagstone surfaces could not be replaced, form liners could be used to stamp cement/concrete to give the appearance of flagstone.
- Better trash and recycling facilities
- Define trail routes and system: improve the trail map with gps technology, and blaze and maintain each trail. Include trail head signage.
- Re-establish structure use- pavilion, restrooms, etc.: The pavilion is well used but would be improved by maintenance & restoration, and new picnic tables. The stage is again being used after years of disuse, with a Summer Concert Series planned this summer.
- Re-establish the Eleanor Reed Butler Waterfall: we think it would be wonderful to re-establish this historical structure as a recirculating waterfall from the pond, for beauty and for pond aeration.
- Improve signage and access: we hope this would include signs within the park- historical and environmental interpretive signage, trail signs, "you are here" maps

We have questions about the following needs, ideas & concepts:

- Park programming: what type of park programming is being proposed? We hope any programming would respect and encourage passive use of the park and appreciation of nature, and we would be interested to work together so that our programming is mutually complementary: <http://glenprovidencepark.org/2013/01/15/2013-schedule-of-events/>
- Create defined grove and lawn areas: we are interested in more information about this, and clarification of where it would be.

We would like to reiterate the following suggestions, which we made previously:

- Pursue National Historic Register status, which would qualify the park for additional grants (Glen Providence Park was determined eligible in 2002)
- Professional preventative care for some of the large and special trees in the park, including the enormous White Oak on the sledding hill
- Footbridges - replace some of the missing ones, replicating the historical WPA bridges
- Additional benches throughout the park, at scenic spots along trails and pond
- Bike racks at entrances
- Information kiosks at entrances, with posted trail map, brief information about the park, and events flyers
- Possibly even re-build the park ranger/guard station on the side of the sledding hill, as an outdoor classroom
- Signs prohibiting biking in the park due to trail erosion
- Dog waste station at 3rd & Kirk entrance (they have been installed at the other 2 entrances)
- Tree placards identifying tree species along the trails
- Re-build former Girl Scout bird blind by Kirk Lane
- Consider a stepping stone labyrinth in the Kirk Lane grassy area
- Consult with stewardship experts about optimal caretaking of the park to maximize environmental health and minimize maintenance.

Overall, we strongly believe the park should be kept as rustic and natural as possible, while carefully maintaining historical structures. This serves multiple purposes:

- It honors the conditions under which the park was donated as a Bird Sanctuary and Arboretum.
- It follows the stated wishes of the Delaware County residents who have participated in the Open Space Plan surveys and meetings, by maintaining natural space and hiking.
- It is the most sustainable model, with the least cost and maintenance.
- It preserves limited natural open space in the County, maintaining vital habitat for plants and wildlife.
- It is the park's natural setting, plants and wildlife that make it valued by the community.

Thank you again for all of the time, thought and work being put into this Open Space Planning process. We are encouraged that so much care is going in to planning the future of the open spaces in our County.

History & Nature Committee, Friends of Glen Providence Park