

Northampton County 21st Century Open Space Initiative

GUIDELINES

February 2005

Revised: December 2013

Prepared by: Northampton County Council Open Space Committee.
Staff assistance by Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.



Northampton County Open Space Initiative

14 Gracedale Avenue
Nazareth, PA 18064

INTRODUCTION

This report contains guidelines, project selection criteria, application forms and other information necessary for the implementation of an open space, park and agricultural preservation program in Northampton County.

In 2006, the County Executive in his budget address, recommended a ½ mill tax increase to fund county open space projects. When the 2007 budget was adopted, it included this increase. The intent was to collect the ½ mill income tax to be used for the Northampton County 21st Century Open Space Initiative.

With the help of those funds, the Northampton County 21st Century Open Space Initiative Natural Features portion has protected 755 acres of important natural features lands. Protecting these lands, not only assures that the land is available for various sorts of public use, but it also helps us to protect the natural resources of those lands, including providing filtration for drinking water, storm water and flood protection, keeping our air clean and not to mention the recreational value these lands can provide. They may not be obvious benefits, but they are incredibly important benefits.

Under the Municipal Park Acquisition and Development program in the initial phase of this Open Space Initiative, the County in conjunction with many of the local municipalities that took advantage of the grant, helped in developing/acquiring 26 park projects at a cost to the county of \$4,000,003. Municipalities who participated contributed their own funds and also received other grant contributions totaling \$10,652,727. This allowed for these municipalities to further expand, improve or acquire parkland to better serve the members of their community. As a part of the county park Open Space Initiative, \$3,876,948 has been committed to the Wayne Grube Memorial Park development to date. Future county park development will be contingent upon available funding. Phase I of the municipal component of the Open Space Initiative is now complete. Phase II will begin in the 2013 fiscal year.

The Farmland Preservation element of this program was established in 1989 in Northampton County, but was included into the Open Space Initiative in 2004. The Farmland Preservation program has preserved to date, 104 farms inclusive of 11,322 acres. State funds dedicated to Northampton County since our first farm was preserved in 1993 are \$34,477,032.00. County funds dedicated to our preservation efforts total \$13,645,942.00 to date. There has not been a year since the inception of this program that there have not been multiple farms on the backlog list.

In 2011, the Farmland Preservation Program included a municipal participation element into their program which will allow municipalities with an approved open space plan and an earned income tax devoted to preservation efforts to partner with the county in contributing funds specifically for preserving farms within their community. As of 2011, seven municipalities have enacted their own "EIT" with the intention of expanding their preservation efforts within their own communities. Many of these are making great progress and other municipalities are looking to them for advice in how to implement this in their communities.

Open Spaces in all forms listed here, are productive assets that generate economic value for our county. They provide significant contributions to our local economies yet allow us to maintain much of our rural character.

Revised 3/2011
Revised 5/2012
Revised 12/2013

Part 2

MUNICIPAL PARK ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Part 2
MUNICIPAL PARK ACQUISITION AND
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
GUIDELINES
PHASE II

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Under the County Council's Open Space Initiative, \$5 million has been allocated for the Northampton County Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program at \$1 million per year over the course of the next five years (2013-2017). The purpose is to assist Northampton County municipalities acquire land for park and recreation purposes and to improve existing parks. Funds available through this part of the Open Space Initiative may be used to acquire land for future park use, to develop existing lands for park use, and to in some case, to rehabilitate existing park facilities.

Based on the availability of funds and the grant application meeting the program's eligibility requirements, townships, cities and boroughs can apply for a grant equal to 50% of the project's costs. Municipalities may apply for a grant that is equal to the total allocation for the municipality (see the following table for municipal allocations). However, all of the total dollars allocated to that municipality may not be available during the first or even the second round of funding. Joint applications involving more than one municipality can be for grants up to the total allocation for all participating municipalities.

This program is a reimbursable grant. The cities, townships and boroughs will be reimbursed up to the approved amount of the county's portion of the grant application. Upon completion of the grant project and the final review of the reimbursement request, payment will be processed. There will not be any "phased" payments, only payment upon completion and final review.

Grant applications will be accepted and approved based on the fiscal allocations for that year. All applications will be received in order and coded by date. They will be rated, ranked and reviewed in the order in which they are received. Applications that are shovel ready will receive preference.

MUNICIPAL ALLOCATION FORMULA

The grant allocation table on page 36 shows the maximum grant available to each of the 38 municipalities. The amount available to any municipality is based on the 2010 Census of Population. Municipalities cannot receive a grant unless they submit an acceptable application.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

The townships, boroughs and city governments in Northampton County are eligible to receive funds under the Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program.

Two or more municipalities may combine their funding allocations under the program and submit a joint application. Each municipality participating in such a multi-municipal grant application will be

considered a grantee and will have the same opportunities and obligations under the program. One or more municipalities may partner with Northampton County on a project.

MUNICIPALITY	Population	2010 % of Population	Municipal Allocation
Northampton County	297,735		\$5,000,000.00
Allen Township	4,269	1.43383%	\$71,691.27
Bangor Borough	5,273	1.77104%	\$88,551.90
Bath Borough	2,693	0.90450%	\$45,224.78
Bethlehem City	55,639	18.68742%	\$934,371.17
Bethlehem Township	23,730	7.97017%	\$398,508.74
Bushkill Township	8,178	2.74674%	\$137,336.89
Chapman Borough	199	0.06684%	\$3,341.90
East Allen Township	4,903	1.64677%	\$82,338.32
East Bangor Borough	1,172	0.39364%	\$19,681.93
Easton City	26,800	9.00129%	\$450,064.65
Forks Township	14,721	4.94433%	\$247,216.48
Freemansburg Borough	2,636	0.88535%	\$44,267.55
Glendon Borough	440	0.14778%	\$7,389.12
Hanover Township	10,866	3.64955%	\$182,477.71
Hellertown Borough	5,898	1.98096%	\$99,047.81
Lehigh Township	10,526	3.53536%	\$176,767.93
Lower Mount Bethel Township	3,101	1.04153%	\$52,076.51
Lower Nazareth Township	5,674	1.90572%	\$95,286.08
Lower Saucon Township	10,772	3.61798%	\$180,899.12
Moore Township	9,198	3.08932%	\$154,466.22
Nazareth Borough	5,746	1.92990%	\$96,495.21
Northampton Borough	9,926	3.33384%	\$166,691.86
North Catasauqua Borough	2,849	0.95689%	\$47,844.56
Palmer Township	20,691	6.94947%	\$347,473.42
Pen Argyl Borough	3,595	1.20745%	\$60,372.48
Plainfield Township	6,138	2.06156%	\$103,078.24
Portland Borough	519	0.17432%	\$8,715.80
Roseto Borough	1,567	0.52631%	\$26,315.35
Stockertown Borough	927	0.31135%	\$15,567.53
Tatamy Borough	1,203	0.40405%	\$20,202.53
Upper Mount Bethel Township	6,706	2.25234%	\$112,616.92
Upper Nazareth Township	6,231	2.09280%	\$104,640.03
Walnutport Borough	2,070	0.69525%	\$34,762.46
Washington Township	5,122	1.72032%	\$86,016.09
West Easton Borough	1,257	0.42219%	\$21,109.38
Williams Township	5,884	1.97625%	\$98,812.70
Wilson Borough	7,896	2.65202%	\$132,601.14
Wind Gap Borough	2,720	0.91356%	\$45,678.20
TOTAL	297,735	100.00000%	\$5,000,000.00

PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN REQUIREMENT

Municipalities are not required to have an adopted park and open space plan to participate in the Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program. Municipalities, however, are urged to prepare and adopt a local park and open space plan. Municipal park and open space plans are an important input to determining the park and open space needs of a community. If the municipality does not have an adopted park and recreation plan, it must furnish a special needs study, a plan for the land acquisition or development, or similar documentation to justify the project.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program grant funds may only be used for projects in Northampton County.

Examples of eligible uses of program funds include the following:

- To acquire land in fee simple to provide parkland for outdoor recreation activities.
- To acquire privately owned recreation land that is threatened by development or abandonment of use.
- To develop recreation facilities of municipal land already acquired and intended for park and recreation use.
- To rehabilitate existing municipally owned park and recreation facilities that is in need of improvement.
- To allow for safety systems to protect and maintain improvements.

The following uses and costs are NOT eligible under this program:

- To acquire land for municipal buildings, fire or police stations, public works maintenance yards, or man-made flood control facilities.
- To acquire structures and/or outbuildings of any monetary value.
- To acquire building façade easements.
- To acquire land for public utility or infrastructure.
- To acquire land for indoor recreation facilities or community centers.
- To acquire, install and/or maintain security cameras at municipal park facilities.

PRESERVATION IN PERPETUITY

All real estate purchased with program funds shall be subject to a deed restriction or conservation easement that permanently prohibits the property from being developed or used for anything except eligible park and recreation purposes.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Public access to any land acquired, developed or rehabilitated with Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program funds is required.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

A Phase I environmental assessment report or a letter on the environmental conditions of the property must be provided if land acquisition is involved. If there is no reason to believe that a property has ever been developed or otherwise disturbed or contaminated, a letter from the municipal engineer or a similarly professionally qualified person may be acceptable to meet this requirement. The applicant also must obtain prior concurrence by someone from the Northampton County agency charged with administering this program if no Phase I environmental assessment or letter on environmental conditions is provided.

COUNTY REVIEW

Northampton County Council reserves the right to reject or seek alterations to applications if it finds the property or project is not suited for its intended use.

All application submissions must be complete and include all necessary information required on the check list at the time of application. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

During the progression of the project, progress reports on the status of the project will be required every six months. If reports are not completed and submitted, the projects are subject for review and funding may be withdrawn at the discretion of the County.

Upon completion of the project, all items listed in the checklist must be submitted for reimbursement. A mandatory inspection will be required upon completion of the project. Funding will not be released until the inspection and review are completed.

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS

For each proposed land or conservation easement purchase acquisition, or for any park development or rehabilitation project, the maximum grant available for townships, cities, and boroughs under the program may not be more than 50% of the property's value or the cost of the development or rehabilitation project. The fair market value of a property or easement is determined by taking the median value of two appraisal reports completed by state-certified appraisers. If the appraised value of the property exceeds \$100,000 the Northampton County Open Space Advisory Board (NCOSAB) may require a second appraisal report.

The appraisal report should exclude the value of any structural improvements to the property, as program funds may not be used to acquire such improvements.

The maximum amount that will be awarded to any qualifying municipality is the total allocation amount listed in the table on page 36. Municipalities may submit more than one proposal for county funding. Joint applications involving more than one municipality may be for up to the sum of the total allocated dollars for each applicant.

Cities, townships and boroughs are required to provide 50% of the project cost. The local share may come from municipal funds, federal grants, state grants, private contributions, or private donations including the value of bargain sales. In-kind services may be included in that 50% requirement.

The monetary cost to the municipality for land that was acquired for park and recreation purposes after December 31, 2009 can be credited toward the local match, for townships, cities, and boroughs - up to 30% of the total project cost.

As part of the local match, up to 5% of the total project cost can be for "soft costs" such as appraisals, surveys, legal fees or other administrative costs that are related to the property acquisition, development or rehabilitation. (Example: if the total project cost is \$200,000, 5% or \$10,000 in soft costs can be credited toward the local match.)

DEADLINE FOR USING PROGRAM FUNDS

The deadline for cities, townships and boroughs to make use of the funds available through the Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program is **five years from the date of approval and authorization of Phase II by the County**. Any program funds that a city, township or borough has not used or made application to use by the deadline date will be withdrawn. The NCOSAB will recommend to the County Council a plan for reallocating any unused Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program funds.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the Municipal Parks Program or need additional information or materials, please contact:

Maria Bentzoni, Program Coordinator
Greystone Building
14 Gracedale Avenue
Nazareth, PA 18064
610-746-1993
Fax: 610-746-5262
mbentzoni@northamptoncounty.org

GRANT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program

LAND ACQUISITION

Documentation to be submitted with a grant application:

- Completed grant application form and application checklist (see attached application form).
- Brief report outlining the municipal land acquisition. This report must describe:
 1. The site to be acquired, including acreage, current owner, natural features such as streams, wetlands, steep slopes, woodland and the like, and any structural improvements.
 2. The purchase price.
 3. How the location of the property is consistent with the municipality's park plan and/or comprehensive plan (when applicable).
- A real estate appraisal (completed under the guidelines established for the program). If the appraised value of the property exceeds \$100,000, the NCOSAB may require a second appraisal report.
- Map of the municipality (8.5" X 11") showing the location of the property and any other adjacent or nearby land that is permanently preserved as park or open space land, or any land that contains an agricultural conservation easement.
- Tax parcel map (8.5" X 11") showing the size and configuration of the site to be acquired.
- Phase I Environmental Assessment or similar report on the property (if applicable).
- Copy of the sales agreement (if completed).
- Commitment letters from non-county funding sources (if applicable).
- A resolution adopted by the municipality authorizing the submission of the application (see attached recommended resolution).

Documentation to be submitted prior to settlement

- Signed Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions protecting the property for park use in perpetuity.
- Legal description of the area subject to the Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions.
- Marked -up title insurance report and title insurance commitment.
- Any additional information that the NCOSAB deems necessary.

PARK DEVELOPMENT OR REHABILITATION

Documentation to be submitted with a grant application:

- Completed grant application form and application checklist (see attached application form).
- A summary description of the proposed project. This report must include:
 1. A description of the proposed park development or rehabilitation.
 2. An itemized cost estimate certified by a municipal engineer or similarly qualified person.
 3. How the proposed development is consistent with the municipality's park plan and/or comprehensive plan (when applicable).
- Map of the municipality (8.5" X 11") showing the location of the property where the development or rehabilitation is to take place.
- Commitment letters from non-county funding sources (if applicable).
- A resolution adopted by the municipality authorizing the submission of the application (see attached recommended resolution).

Documentation to be submitted prior to release of grant monies by the County:

- A cover letter stating the project has been completed to the satisfaction of the municipality.
- A summary report detailing the project(s) and description of the completed work.
- A summary cost (expense) breakdown of the project. (i.e. services provided, cost, as applicable)
- In-kind expense sheet, detailing hours, salary, equipment use, and time.
- Photographs of the completed project.
- Copies of payments made (receipts and/or cancelled checks)

If the items listed above are not completed to the satisfaction of the County, payment will be delayed until required items are submitted and approved.

GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program

Application Information

1. Municipality: _____
2. Name and Title of Contact Person: _____
3. Mailing Address: _____
4. Telephone Number: _____ Email: _____

Project and Site Information

5. Project Name: _____
6. Site Address or Location: _____
7. Type of Project: (circle one) Acquisition Development Rehabilitation
8. Number of acres to be acquired (if land acquisition is involved): _____
9. If land acquisition, what is the intended use of the land? _____
10. Does the project involve the expansion of an existing recreation facility: Yes _____ No _____
11. Does the project link two or more existing recreation areas? Yes _____ No _____
12. Does the municipality have an adopted park and/or open space plan? Yes _____ No _____

Grant Request Information

13. Project Finances (please outline the proposed method of financing the project)

County Grant Request	\$	%
Municipal Contribution	\$	%
Other:	\$	%
Other:	\$	%
Other:	\$	%
Total Funding:	\$	100%

14. Fair Market Value – Appraisal #1 _____ Appraisal #2 _____
15. Anticipated Settlement Date: _____
16. Projected Project Length: _____

GRANT APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Municipal Park Acquisition, Development and Rehabilitation Program

The Northampton County Open Space Advisory Board (NCOSAB) meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month and when required, will meet to review municipal park acquisition and development grant applications under the Northampton County Open Space Initiative. The following outlines the steps for obtaining approval of a grant:

1. Submit a completed grant application to the County by the application deadline (see below – to be determined later). The application should include the enclosed application checklist, and recommended resolution authorizing submission of the grant proposal to the county. The application will be reviewed by the program administrator.
2. The applicant will present the municipality's grant proposal at a NCOSAB meeting. The NCOSAB will forward a recommendation on the grant application to the County Council Open Space Committee.
3. The County Council Open Space Committee will review and present their recommendations to County Council.
4. The County Council will review and take action on the application at a public meeting.
5. Following approval of the grant by the County Council, the grant is disbursed to the municipality at the property settlement of the proposed land acquisition or the completion of the proposed park development/rehabilitation.

The schedule below may be used as a guide to determine when grant funds could be available for a property settlement or the completion of a park development/rehab project.

Application Deadline	NCOSAB	Council Committee	County Council
March 31 st	*	**	***
September 30 th	*	**	***
December 31 st	*	**	***

*Upon completion of the submission review, project will be submitted to the Open Space Advisory Board at their next regularly scheduled meeting.

** Upon approval from the NCOSAB, the project will be forwarded to be reviewed by the Council Committee at their next scheduled meeting.

*** Upon approval from the Council Committee, the project will be forwarded to be reviewed by the full Council at their next regularly scheduled meeting.

Letters will be sent to the applicants notifying them of the status of the approval process.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program
(Attach document with original signatures to Grant Application)

Township/Borough/City of _____

WHEREAS, THE Board of Supervisors/Board of Commissioners/Council of the Township/Borough/City of _____ recognizes that the Township/Borough/City needs to provide park and recreation facilities that contribute to the quality of life and economic health of our community; and

WHEREAS, the County Council of Northampton County has established the Northampton County Open Space Initiative supported by a referendum overwhelmingly passed by Northampton County Voters on November 5, 2002; and

WHEREAS, the program provides for funding grants that may be used by the municipality to acquire land for park purposes and for park development; and

WHEREAS, the Township/Borough/City of _____, Northampton County, Pennsylvania wishes to participate in the Municipal Park Acquisition and Development Program; and

WHEREAS, the municipality will have available \$ _____, its required match,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the governing body of the Township/Borough/City of _____, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, as follows:

- 1 That the Township/Borough/City of _____, Northampton County, Pennsylvania hereby approves the filing of an application for funds under the Park Acquisition and Development Program.
- 2 That _____, is hereby authorized and directed to execute and file the appropriate forms with the Northampton County Open Space Advisory Board.

This Resolution has been duly prepared and adopted by the Governing Body of the Township/Borough/City of _____ in a public meeting held this _____ day of _____, 20____.

SIGNATORIES: _____

ATTEST: _____

**PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA FOR MUNICIPAL PARK
ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**

Rehabilitation projects are not subject to the ranking criteria and therefore will not be ranked against this criteria.

Municipality: _____

Project Name: _____

Project Type: (circle one) Acquisition Development

Acreage: (land acquisition only) _____

In order to be eligible for funding for a municipal park acquisition, development or rehabilitation grant, the applicant must show that the proposal meets the objectives of the municipality's park and recreation plan. If the municipality does not have an adopted park and recreation plan, some other form of justification for the project must be shown. This can include a special needs study, a plan for the land acquisition, development, or rehabilitation or similar documentation.

BASE CRITERIA VALUE

POINTS

1. Intended use of land to be acquired (maximum 7 points)
 - a. Active Recreation.....7
 - b. Passive Recreation.....5
 - c. Project does not involve the acquisition of land.....3

2. Acreage of the land to be acquired (maximum of 6 points)
 - a. Over 75 acres.....6
 - b. 25-74.....4
 - c. Under 25 acres.....2
 - d. No land will be acquired.....0

3. Suitability of the site for its intended purpose (maximum 8 points)
 - a. Parcel's characteristics are ideally suited for its intended use.....8
 - b. Parcel's characteristics are moderately suited for its intended use.....4
 - c. Parcel is not suited for its intended use.....0

4. Suitability of the site for a variety of recreation activities (maximum 5 points)
 - a. High (7 or more activities).....5
 - b. Medium (4-6 activities).....3
 - c. Low (1-3 activities).....1

5. Parcel links recreation areas (maximum 5 points)
 - a. Parcel links two or more existing recreation areas.....5
 - b. Parcel is adjacent to an existing recreation area.....3
 - c. No linkage or expansion of an existing recreation area.....0

- 6. Municipal park and open space plan or special needs study (maximum 5 points)
 - a. The municipality has an adopted park and open space plan.....5
 - b. The municipality has done a special needs study or has documentation showing the need for the project.....3
 - c. The municipality is not preparing a park and open space plan.....0

- 7. The amount of municipally-owned park acreage is below the suggested standard of 6.25 acres of local, close to home space per 1,000 residents (maximum 6 points)
 - a. There are less than 3 acres per 1,000 persons.....6
 - b. There are less than 3.0-5.9 acres per 1,000 persons.....4
 - c. There are less than 6.0-8.0 acres per 1,000 persons.....2
 - d. There are over 8.0 acres per 1,000 persons.....0

- 8. Project partnerships (maximum 3 points)
 - a. Project is in cooperation with another public agency (i.e. other municipality, public authority, school district, etc.).....3
 - b. There are no municipal partnerships involved.....0

- 9. Non-county funding available for the project (maximum 5 points)
 - a. Over 75%.....5
 - b. 60% - 75%.....3
 - c. More than the required 50% match but less than 60%.....1
 - d. Local match is no more than the required 50%.....0

- 10. The land to be acquired provides access to a river or stream (maximum 4 points)
 - a. The land provides access to the Lehigh River, Delaware River or a major Stream (Bushkill, Monocacy, Hokendauqua, Saucon).....4
 - b. Land provides access to a minor stream.....2
 - c. Land to be acquired does not contain or have access to any streams.....0

- 11. Quality and completeness of the application (maximum of 5 points)
 - a. High.....5
 - b. Medium.....3
 - c. Low.....0

- 12. Expansion Potential (maximum 5 points)
 - a. Land has potential to expand facilities/activities in the future.....5
 - b. No potential for future expansion.....0

Total Ranking Score: