

Six Parks Plus Plan

Recreation, Park Amenity and Landscaping Improvements

Below is a short detail of the proposed plans Castle Shannon Borough currently has in place for improvement and updates for our recreation and park amenities. With the help of our engineering team at LSSE Civil Engineering and Surveyors, we hope to provide the best spaces for our residents. The Six Parks Plan includes updates to Hamilton Park, the Municipal Center, Riehl Park, Prospect Park, Myrtle Avenue Park, O'Brien Field, and the Castle Shannon Library.

Hamilton Park – Upper and Mid

Considering the fairly recent investments associated with the pavilion, restrooms, tot lots and playground equipment as well as ample parking the proposed future use of “Upper” Hamilton Park is suggested to remain with improved amenities, augmented offerings with the intent of making Upper Hamilton the young child / parent bonding center of the Castle Shannon Park offerings.

Upper Hamilton Park

- Consideration was given to removing the underutilized lower park exercise stations (non-moving parts type) and relocating them to the upper park surrounding the tot-lot. This concept will enable adults to utilize the exercise stations while supervising children. Enhanced utilization of these exercise station type equipment would likely be achieved when located closer to tot-lot and playground amenities.
- Additional tot-lot equipment, swing sets, benches etc. with integral shading amenities
- Splash pad/water feature on the upper end near Grant Street intersect where the current monkey bars are located complete with soft landscape buffering and sound attenuated control building integral with topography, yet accessible for maintenance.
- Improved pedestrian/patron circulation around the rented pavilion amenity to create separation from pavilion rental party attendees and walking patrons connected to overlook potential just to the north of the pavilion.
- Steps to connect to Fountain Street to provide walking access from Route 88 establishments including Mindful Brewery and the other retail and institutional establishments.

Mid Hamilton Park

- The passive recreation/overlook ethos initially proposed at Prospect Park was transitioned to Upper/Mid Hamilton Park.
- Mid Hamilton Park provides a unique transition from Upper Hamilton (kid centric) to Lower Hamilton (Team Sports/older kids/adult centric).
- A bypass trail for pedestrian patrons as well as providing access to passive recreation/reflection via proposed gazebo, public art, benches with thoughtful, strategic landscaping highlight proposed amenities as well as overlook potential referenced above for Upper Hamilton.
- General repurposing of the existing smaller pavilion, middle basketball court, horseshoe area on the slope below the existing parking lot in the Upper Hamilton Park area was strongly considered. Given the surrounding topography (lower than the Upper and above the Lower) and surrounding mature vegetation, it lends itself to a more tranquil outdoor recreational experience perhaps suited toward passive recreation and/or a designated niche area such as outdoor yoga.

Hamilton Park – Lower

Lower Hamilton Park has the land area, topography and parking to be the recreation center piece “Bell Cow” of the Castle Shannon Park System for a range of outdoor activities from evening team sports and individual sports, pavilion rentals, weekly community gatherings (i.e. movie nights) that serve as “Community Day” headquarters while providing for a relatively gentle sloped bituminous walking path augmented by public art and sculptures and environmental education opportunities.

- Deer resistant evergreen screening on the Hamilton Road (Castle Court) apartment side of the existing chain link fence to provide enhanced privacy (refer to Insets 13 and 14).
- Conversion of one of the two existing tennis courts into 2 Pickleball courts.
- Slope stabilization and integral resurfacing/paving of lower Hamilton pathway with rain garden stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) and educational opportunity.
- “Welcome” (marquee type signage) signage at the entrance to lower parking lot at recent wall improvements or an entrance arch sign
- Remove batting cages and existing pavilion to repurpose these areas with a new stage-pavilion- kitchen– restroom storage integral combination thereby improving vehicular traffic circulation.
- Demolish block building and incorporate new, nominal volume cold storage facility within the pavilion/stage/kitchen/restroom.
- Raise field grade and add bio-swaes for drainage improvements.
- Install artificial turf with attended drainage system to accommodate baseball and all-weather soccer at Lower Hamilton.
- Install commercial lighting at Lower Hamilton at 30 foot-candle (minimum) thresholds exposure with web-based remote system operability.
- Smaller tot-lot type equipment with shaded seating to the North and South of the proposed pickleball courts.

Hamilton Park – Rear

The shape and land area available for Rear Hamilton Park coupled with existing bituminous areas, restroom access and park access with integral connection to Lower Hamilton lends itself to conversion from a quasi-basketball use / Public Works storage to niche summertime uses including:

- Increased access for food trucks beyond Community Day, possibly regular seasonal use (monthly food truck roundup).
- Access to existing storage is indirect and challenging because of the basketball hoops and pavilion area. Repurposing Rear Hamilton improves traffic circulation both vehicular and patron access.
- Relocated horseshoe court and upgrade basketball offerings. Relocating horseshoes from the middle park to an entirely different location more easily accessible to senior citizens and the general public as well as more visible to passersby will increase opportunity for use.
- Similar in nature, Rear Hamilton lends itself to a Cornhole court(s) application in conjunction with horseshoes.
- Supplemental overflow parking.

Municipal Center

- It is acknowledged that there are restroom provisions within the municipal building, however future additions should consider adding an independent restroom facility.
- Concessions are currently on small porch/deck at police department adjunct. Consideration was given to expanding the deck to provide larger concessions area or elevated seating for game viewing with aluminum bleacher installations.
- Improved parking striping with clearer delineation of parking and basketball uses in current parking lot; expand parking on westerly side of the building to accommodate 8 to 10 additional spaces.
- Shaded swing sets, shaded tot lots and pavilion to improve area/use efficiency beyond the third baseline is proposed to provide a more family friendly atmosphere/use during baseball/softball games.
- Given the level of activity at the municipal fields pertaining to baseball and softball, the other area beyond right field (North of Borough Building) generally on the other side of the municipal center lends itself to supplemental uses for older children (teens) and adults including a basketball court, and perhaps future beach/sand volleyball.
- The gymnasium on the easterly side of building is occasionally used by Castle Shannon Youth Association for spring/late winter practice before the outdoor fields are playable. However, the gym is under-utilized other than CSYA. Challenges that need to be overcome include HVAC improvements, ceiling and wall improvements with drop-down netting potential (among others) that would allow for improved indoor recreational potential. Potential community activities for gym include:
 - Volleyball,
 - Expanded CSYA uses,
 - Futsal ball,
 - Hand ball courts,
 - Craft shows / book sales / exercise classes / offerings,
 - Yoga and meditation classes for adults and
 - Adult day activities.

Given the amount of investment required and potential return via rental/use income, it is recommended to repurpose of this area to provide supplemental parking to permit the uses described above as well provide for overflow parking for baseball/softball tournaments.

Riehl Park

Improvements considered include the following:

- Given the ample parking and ability to host multiple events as well as the common use of the existing baseball outfield as a U6 soccer field, Riehl Park is the likely candidate to partially re-purpose and provide Dek-hockey opportunities. This would eliminate baseball uses at Riehl (move to Municipal). This scope would also remove upper playground to regrade area to accommodate Dek hockey and re-connect walking path and provide additional area for warm-up / staging.
 - Move U6 field from existing baseball outfield to far end of soccer field (to the West).
 - A steel pile remaining wall used to create Riehl Park is likely near the end of its useful life. Wall improvements incorporating art/mural into the retaining wall will need accommodated.
 - Incorporate sheltered seating integral with both walking trail and soccer / Dek hockey uses with smaller tot lots amenities at strategic locations around the soccer field/trail system.
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Prospect Avenue Park

Early park committee discussion suggested that improvements to be considered include the following:

- Re-purposing entire park into a passive, tranquil outdoor recreational destination experience, eliminating the playground equipment and basketball area. Destination aspects include quiet nature walk park with gazebo and/or trellis for special occasion pictures, public art / sculpture and flowering shrubs integrated into an adjacent overlook area (refer to Inset 15).
- Creation of an overlook area, simple platform area with railing and seating, perhaps multiple overlooks with strategic gazebo placement. Considerable brush and trees clearing will be required to implement the overlook.
- Walking path connecting Prospect Avenue Parklet to Upper Hamilton Park (refer to Figures 19, 20 and 21 contained in Appendix H titled Tier '2' – Prospect Park Connector for the three alternatives prepared as part of the Castle Shannon Active Allegheny study).
- Cul-de-sac for parking and emergency access.

More recent park committee discussion centered on transferring the ethos from Prospect Park to Mid-Hamilton given the amount of investment required and potential usage volume considerations. Public discussion in October 2021 suggested to keep Prospect Park essentially as it is, green open space for kids to play and enjoy the outdoors. Proposed amenities are minimal in scale, including shaded seating areas, small pavilion, new swing set and a small tot-lot to replace the existing, outdated one there as well as miscellaneous landscaping improvements.

Myrtle Avenue Park

Improvements considered include the following:

- Minor general updates to tie colors/themes together with other parks/proposed signage, add trash receptacle.
- Slightly larger pavilion (refer to Inset 16), with a few more benches and 1-2 additional shade trees strategically placed.
- Paint guiderails, remove two freestanding obsolete guiderail posts at narrow corner end and addition of aesthetically pleasing boulders or landscaping to softer guiderail perimeter or removal of guiderail perimeter.
- Add a smaller scale, strategically placed gazebo for neighborhood social recreation.

O'Brien Field

Improvements considered include the following:

- Acknowledging that parking is very limited and that access to the field is problematic and given the fact that its currently underutilized for baseball activities, consideration was given to re-purposing the field. Several concepts were considered including:
 - Skate Park,
 - Horseshoes,
 - Community Gardens,
 - Sculpture Walk,
 - Tool Library,
 - Recycling center for leaves/compost/glass/bottles/E-waste (electronics) and
 - Public Works Facility
- Given that access to O'Brien Field as well as parking accommodations would also play a role in the potential future use of O'Brien Field, several access/parking considerations included:
 - Parking improvements at dead end to accommodate 10-12 parking stalls (adding some organized / defined parking)
 - Rework dead-end to be a cul-de-sac with "on-street" parking on the edges.
 - Add steps and paths from Castleview Road (below field) to allow on- street parking on Castleview Road and pedestrian access to the field with perhaps home team parking in upper lot off Maplewood Drive while the away team parks on Castleview Road.
 - Walking trail around field could be reasonably accommodated for on-site pedestrian activity.
 - Take advantage of sloped grades and rock outcroppings between parking and field for additional bleacher seating built into the slopes.
 - Add bike rack near field.
- The O'Brien Field parcel is located in a unique area of Castle Shannon Borough. It is bordered by single family residential zoning on 1 1/2 sides along Maplewood Drive and some portion of the easterly property line on the Rolling Rock Drive cul-de-sac lots. The balance of the easterly property line and southerly property line (e.g. 1 ½ sides) are of Industrial Zoning (Castle View Drive). The parcel's border to the west is zoned Central Commercial (Matthews Bus Garage). With these adjacent uses and the fact that the parcel is topographically and somewhat geographically remote from the heart of Castle Shannon, the potential to re-purposing this under-utilized public field into a state-of-the-art public works facility / recycling center is the lead recommended alternative. Very preliminary space planning was evaluated for this concept including provisions for:
 - 5X – 5 Ton dump truck with plows
 - 1X – F250 or F350 pickup truck,
 - 1X – Camera truck / large van
 - 1X – Backhoe
 - Salt storage
 - Miscellaneous bin storage or Hamilton Park Quonset relocation
 - Future accommodations:
 - 1X – Combo Jetter / Vactor
 - 5X – 5 Ton dump truck with plows
 - 1X – F250 or F350 pickup truck,

- If this alternative were to be pursued, it would enable the existing public works facility along Chestnut Avenue to be re-purposed as a Tool Library or demolished / converted into some form of neighborhood parklet ala Myrtle Avenue, however only larger in footprint with the ability for expansion as adjacent parcels potentially transfer. The location of a Chestnut Avenue parklet would be more central to the core of Castle Shannon neighborhoods as shown on Figure 17.

Given the magnitude of this investment (approximately \$4.2 million) in terms of re-purposing O'Brien to DPW Facilities, it is recommended that the Borough defer this conversion to some point in the future, while investing in moderate upgrades at the existing Chestnut Street facility to meet existing needs. As such, proposed aggregate OPC does not include investment in O'Brien field yielding to maintaining its current use.

Castle Shannon Library

In addition to the six borough parks, potential outdoor recreational activities/outdoor opportunities are factored herein associated with the Castle Shannon Public Library enhancing the library's current multi-use, multi-generational offerings/programming. Hence the title, "Six Parks Plus Plan."

Improvements to the front of the library include a "reading lawn" (with movable shaded seating) and a "hammock grove" with reading hammocks complete with rejuvenated landscaping. Existing bituminous access to the immediate north of the library could be repurposed to a pavement mural providing opportunities for local artists or a library event. To the rear of the library a multi-tiered bituminous parking lot exists in which a portion could be repurposed to an amphitheater type setting with a stage/pavilion supporting community events, outdoor classes, neighborhood evening/twilight movies. The grassy areas of the parcel on the eastern side/rear of the property facing Spruce Street could also support educational opportunities associated with bird house, bee houses coupled with a pollinator garden repurposed as part of a refreshed landscaping effort in that general area complete with interpretive signage.

Figure 19 shows conceptual general arrangement drawing of proposed/conceptual improvements at the library compliments of Castle Shannon Parks Committee member Katie Kovalchik. A materials listing/conceptual OPC is provided in Table 10. It is noted that costs associated with a pavilion/small amphitheater are not included on Table 10, in-as-much as this facility could be considered for communal fundraising opportunities.