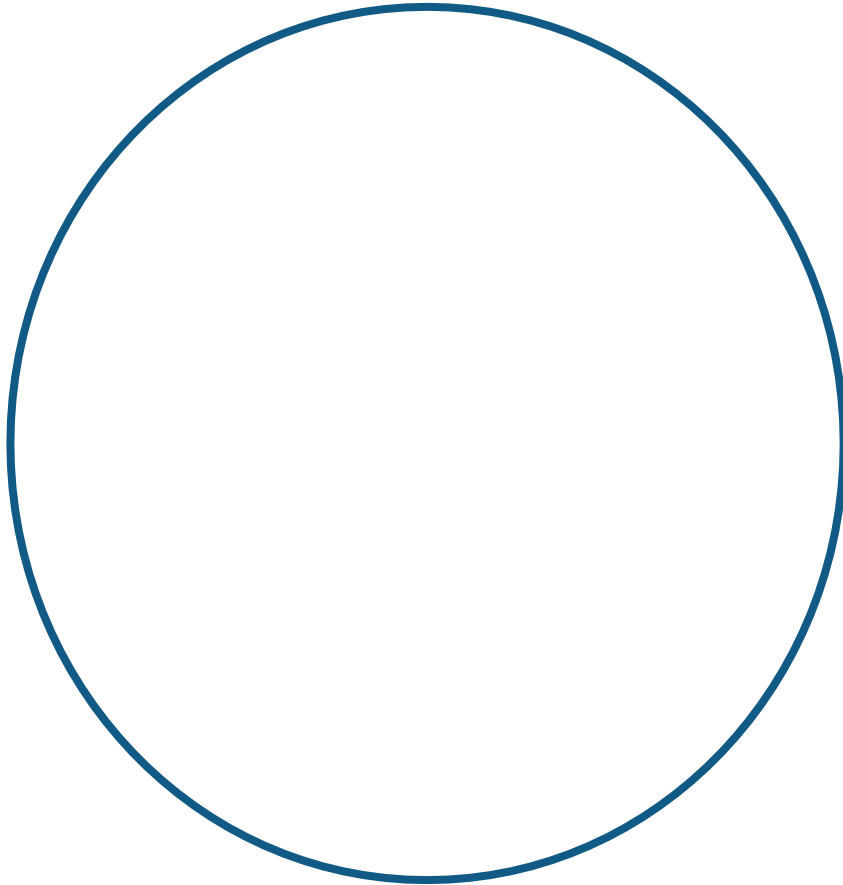


An aerial photograph of a lush park. In the foreground, a winding paved path leads through green grass and young trees. To the left, a calm pond reflects the sky, bordered by a stone wall and bare trees. In the background, a large hill covered in dense, colorful foliage rises under a cloudy sky. A few buildings and a parking lot are visible on the hillside.

The Bright Side of COVID

*Increased Demand for Outdoor Recreation
Has Led to New Civic Investments*

Today's Panelists



Andrew Schwartz
Environmental Planning and Design



Bryan Clement
HF Lenz Company

Session Objectives

- ❖ Gain an understanding of how Pennsylvanians have shifted their recreational preferences over the past 20 years and how this shift was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic
- ❖ Discover the site planning-design strategies used to transform an existing, tired recreational facility into an appealing, equitable and inclusive civic amenity
- ❖ Learn about the funding, bidding and construction challenges that have become today's new norm when building civic/public works projects fabric and amenities



History

History of McDade Park

- ❖ McDade Park, one of Lackawanna County's four county park facilities, is located within the City of Scranton and encompasses approximately 200 acres. The park was originally developed in the 1970s and is home to numerous traditional county park amenities like picnic areas, ponds, walking trails, a boundless playground, athletic fields, sport courts, and a swimming pool
- ❖ The park is also home to unique venues such as an arboretum, the Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum and the Coal Mine Tour – leisure attractions that commemorate the region's coal heritage

History of McDade Park



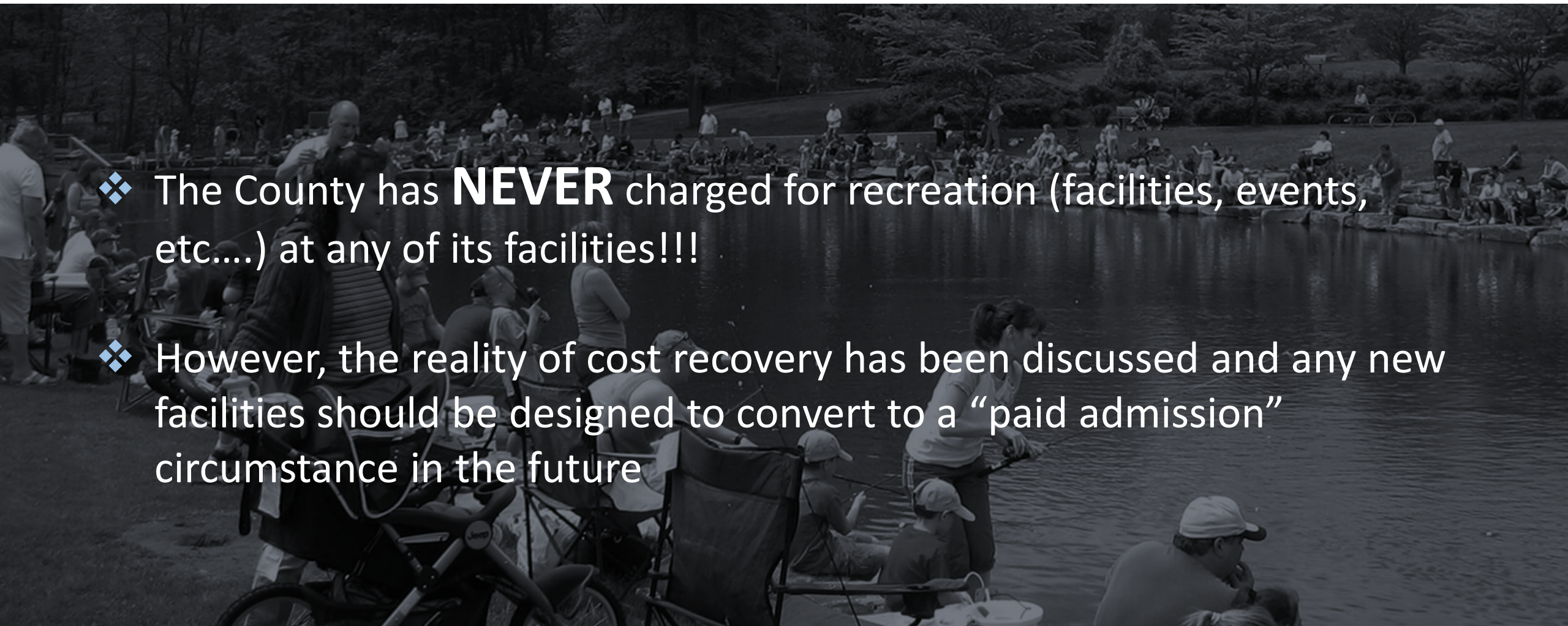
Community Place within a Regional Park

- ❖ McDade Park has a unique circumstance in that it's a county-owned and operated facility situated within a dense urban center. The park property is surrounded on 3 sides by residential neighborhoods; its fourth side adjoins the PA Turnpike's Northeast Extension. This makes the park both walkable and easily accessible by car
- ❖ The Park was developed on former mined lands and was planned with the customary activities and amenities expected to be found within a regional park – such as memorials, museums, pavilions and trails. However, it does not have the expansive rural spaces or unique natural features often found in a regional location. Rather, it also contains uses found within a community park – sports courts and ballfields

Community Place within a Regional Park



“Free”

- 
- ❖ The County has **NEVER** charged for recreation (facilities, events, etc....) at any of its facilities!!!
 - ❖ However, the reality of cost recovery has been discussed and any new facilities should be designed to convert to a “paid admission” circumstance in the future

An Amenity in High Demand

- ❖ The park is the most visited facility in the County and is conveniently accessible to the majority of the County's population. While the park accommodates residents' everyday recreational needs, it also attracts out-of-county visitors and tourists who are interested in the coal heritage interpretative areas
- ❖ McDade Park has largely remained the same since it was opened and has only seen modest updates or improvements. While the COVID-19 pandemic had the unfortunate effect of restricting what residents could do in the County parks, it positively fueled resident appetite and demand for visiting and using the parks any way they could

The background image is a dark, monochromatic, high-contrast portrait of a man's face. The man has a full, dark beard and mustache. He is wearing a dark hat with a band. The image has a grainy, almost stencil-like quality. The text is overlaid in the center of the face.

COVID-19 and Shifts in Recreation Trends

Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ Lackawanna County, much like most jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth, was experiencing the shift in recreation trends towards a) non-organized athletic pursuits, b) spontaneous, outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, paddling and swimming and c) more socially oriented pursuits such as splash pads, fire pits and backyard games. To many recreation professionals, these shifts began to emerge 10 to 15 years ago, but COVID-19 accelerated their demand and expansion.

Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic

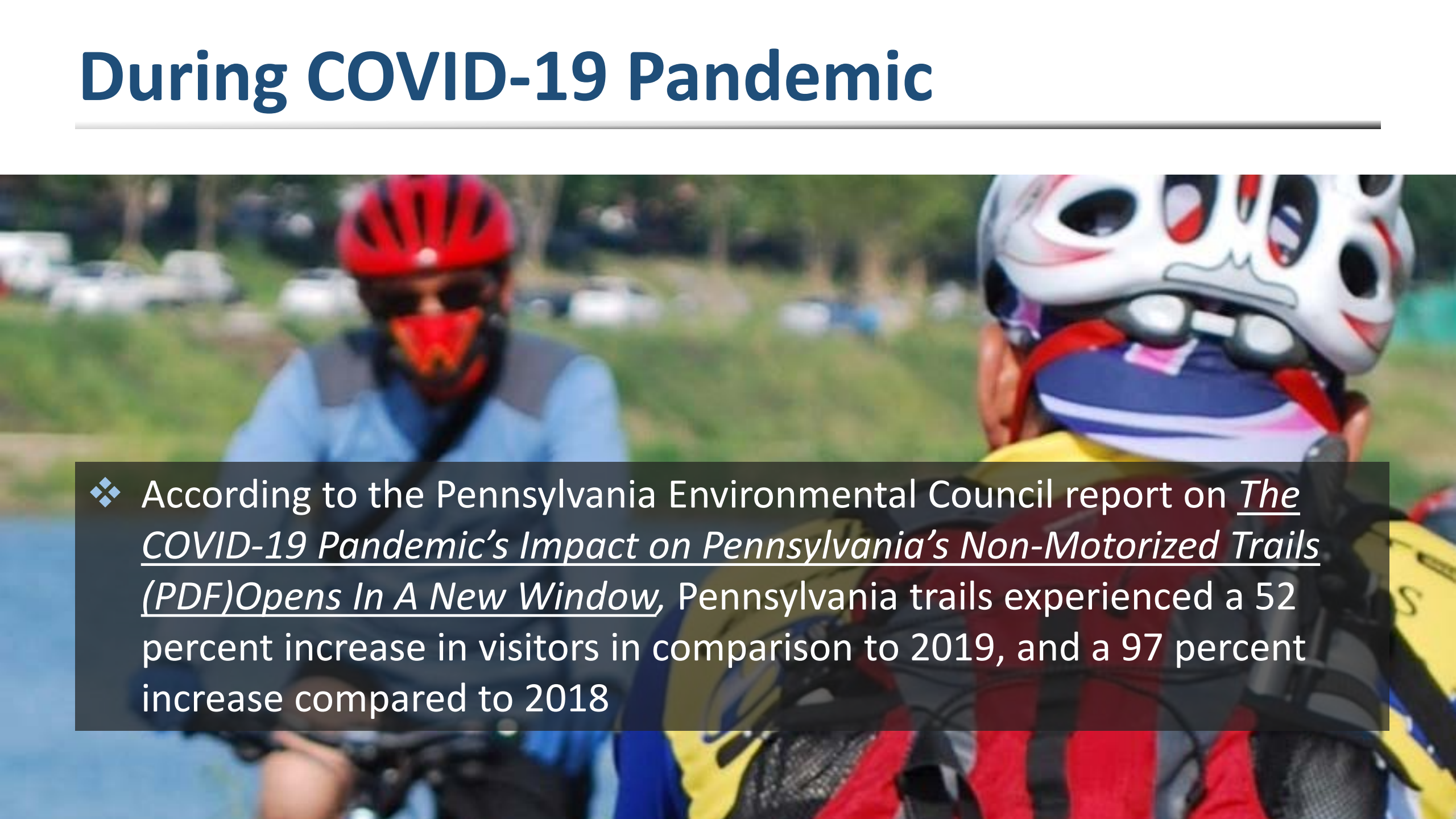


- ❖ By 2020, the County Commissioners realized that new investments in the County's park were needed. This would provide residents with recreational opportunities not currently being satisfied elsewhere in the County. The County leadership recognized that its recreational amenities were essential to resident retention and attraction

During COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ With the stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic, a rising percentage of persons and families turned to socially distanced outdoor activities. People tended to hike, bike, and play outside to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- ❖ While some were visiting parks and trails in lieu of their closed gyms, others were seeking the restorative mental health benefits that nature can provide. Pennsylvania parks and trails became the remedy for those who needed to get out of their home, to find some calm and to combat quarantine weight gain

During COVID-19 Pandemic

- 
- A background image showing two cyclists. The cyclist on the left is wearing a red helmet and a red face covering. The cyclist on the right is wearing a white helmet with a cartoon face and a blue face covering. They are outdoors, possibly on a trail or near a body of water.
- ❖ According to the Pennsylvania Environmental Council report on *The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Pennsylvania's Non-Motorized Trails (PDF)Opens In A New Window*, Pennsylvania trails experienced a 52 percent increase in visitors in comparison to 2019, and a 97 percent increase compared to 2018

During COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ Pennsylvania's experience was seen nationally as well. By 2021, a surge in growth on the retail sector of the recreation industry emerged. This spike has continued into 2022 and 2023
- ❖ The market size of the sporting goods retail industry (which includes sporting equipment, firearms and hunting equipment, athletic apparel and athletic footwear) measured by revenue is **\$67.8 billion** in 2023, per recent figures from IBISWorld. It's important to note IBISWorld figures take into account **ONLY** retail store sales; their statistics exclude online sales

During COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ The outdoor recreation industry has grown 6.7% per year on average in the U.S. between 2018 and 2023, with a marked jump between 2020 to 2021. In fact, the sporting goods industry in the U.S. has increased faster than the economy overall



Post-COVID-19 Pandemic – So Far

- ❖ The number of walkers and bikers on our trails is definitely down from 2-years ago
- ❖ As the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic has loosened, scholastic sports have returned and organized sports are back on the front burner. People are not spending as much time in our natural areas
- ❖ While spending on outdoor recreation equipment, such as fishing rods, tents, skis, etc... has dropped somewhat, purchases remain higher than 5-years ago
- ❖ We may be experiencing an equilibrium in our recreation trends

Important Take-aways

- ❖ While the shift towards outdoor recreation inclusive of activities like boating, swimming, running outdoors, bicycle riding, climbing, walking on trails, and reading or relaxing in nature continues, there is now more emphasis on accessibility to people of all ages and ability levels
- ❖ Park managers and policy makers should continue to highlight/communicate the health benefits of outdoor recreation to encourage healthy participation in outdoor recreation
- ❖ Planners should provide more social-type spaces in our parks where the spaces aren't about physical exertion but more about mental wellness

Important Take-aways

- ❖ Individual, self-curated fitness activities do NOT seem to have faded since the effects of the pandemic have lessened
- ❖ People don't want to travel far for their everyday recreational pursuits
- ❖ Given increased visitation numbers, its important to make people feel safe and comfortable; provide ample green space and social separation
- ❖ Test new amenities via “pop-up” or trial installations before committing to significant investments; people were receptive to “temporary” facilities introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic

Important Take-aways

- 
- A wide-angle photograph of a large, green grassy park, likely Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. In the background, there are various city buildings, including colorful Victorian houses and taller skyscrapers in the distance. The park is filled with people; some are sitting on blankets, others are standing. White chalk circles are drawn on the grass, creating a pattern across the field. In the foreground, a person wearing a red shirt and a red cap is lying on their back on a striped blanket, looking towards the camera. A blue ball and a black can are next to them. A semi-transparent dark box with white text is overlaid on the middle of the image.
- ❖ Hopefully, a thing of the past! We should proactively plan for the need but let's learn from this and develop better solutions

A vibrant splash pad at a park with children playing under various water features. A large blue arch on the left sprays water. In the center, a green structure has a child climbing. To the right, a pink arch and a tall green pole with a circular top are visible. A child in a red shirt runs in the foreground, while a child in a blue shirt is seen from behind on the right. A red umbrella with 'LIVE OAK' is in the background. The text 'From Tired to Appealing' is overlaid in white script.

From Tired to Appealing

Replace the 40-Year-Old Pool

Limited Amenities and ADA Accommodations



Replace the 40-Year-Old Pool

Geotechnical Limitations and Drainage Challenges



Replace the 40-Year-Old Pool

Aggressive Construction Schedule

Phase 1 – Splash Pad Construction Schedule

Complete Design	April 4, 2022
Bid Documents Ready	April 25, 2022
Advertise project	4/24, 4/27
Pre-Bid	May 3, 2022
RFI Due	May 6, 2022
Bids Due/Open Bids	May 16, 2022
HFL Award Recommendation	May 25, 2022
LCC Meeting Reject Bid	May 18, 2022

Phase 2 – Park Pool Construction Schedule

Complete Final Design of Pool Renovations	1/1/2023
Review Final Design with Lackawanna County	1/2/2023
Begin final coordination with Vortex/Splash Pad Contractor	12/12/2023
Revise Construction Documents as Necessary	1/6/2023
Out to Bid	1/9/2023
Execute contract with Vortex Contractor	1/16/2023
Receive/Open Bids	1/23/2023
EPD/HFL Recommendation	1/25/2023
Commissioner's Approval	2/1/2023
Award Pool Renovation Contract	2/2/2023
Begin Pool Renovations and Splash Pad Construction	2/16/2023

Complete Construction of Pool Renovations and Splash Pad 7/4/2023

Replace the 40-Year-Old Pool

Bidding, Supply Chain and Cost Escalation Hardships

- ❖ As many construction projects experienced during the pandemic, the County had to grapple with numerous hardships in order to complete their vision and utilize the available funding:
 - ✓ a smaller number of contractors bidding on work (needed 2 bids)
 - ✓ shortages of some building materials or specialized equipment because of the lack of raw materials, labor shortages or trucking availability
 - ✓ serious cost increases – some improvements such as concrete have increased over 40% in the past 3-years

Replace the 40-Year-Old Pool

A New Vision for Water Recreation

Replace the 40-Year-Old Pool

A Placemaking Approach



Replace the 40-Year-Old Pool

A Placemaking Approach



Replace the Tennis Courts

- ❖ Again, the former mined lands and the lack of adequate soil compaction during reclamation, has left the existing courts in horrible condition
- ❖ Demand for court time increased
- ❖ No additional amenities such as a sun shade or screen, gathering areas or spectator seating currently exist

Add Pickleball Courts

- ❖ Pickleball has continued its rapid trajectory increasing by 85.7% year-over-year and by an astonishing 158.6% over three years.
- ❖ With 8.9 million participants in 2022, the number of new participants exceeded the total number of 2021 pickleball participants.



Add Pickleball Courts

6 Court Option

VS.

8 Court Option

A photograph of a wooden trolley car on a track leading up to a wooden building labeled 'TIPPLE'. The scene is set in a wooded area with a mountain in the background. The text 'Final Thoughts and Discussion' is overlaid in a large, white, italicized font.

Final Thoughts and Discussion

Panelist Information

❖ **Andrew Schwartz** Director of Design, Environmental Planning and Design
andrewschwartz@epd-pgh.com

❖ **Bryan Clement** Senior Civil Engineer, H.F. Lenz Company
bclement@hflenz.com