

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Parks and Recreation Master Plan  
City of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
May 6th, 2024

Contact Person: Corey Gray  
Senior Planner  
City of Bethlehem  
10 E. Church Street  
Bethlehem PA 18018  
(610) 997-7628  
cgray@bethlehem-pa.gov

Release Date: May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Due Date for Responses: June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 by 4pm

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Bethlehem is seeking a qualified consulting firm for the completion of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Bethlehem is home to over 75,000 residents and boasts over 40 parks and/or recreational opportunities within the city limits. Many of these facilities are showing signs of aging, and the equipment is outdated and unsafe. Parks are an important component to quality of life within the City of Bethlehem and enhance neighborhood amenities for residents.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (“The Plan”) would be interdepartmental, created in partnership with the City’s departments of Community and Economic Development and Public Works. The Plan will guide decision-making and strategic planning of the rehabilitation and maintenance of recreational opportunities in the City by identifying recommendations for short-term improvements, along with long-term strategic goals of the City’s parks and recreational offerings.

The Plan will also include an analysis of the environment and stormwater management opportunities that exist within our existing park network. Additionally, an assessment of the current recreational offerings should include what groups are being served, and what groups may have additional programming needs to ensure equal access and opportunities across all neighborhoods. A critical component to this effort is determining the appropriate staffing to adequately manage additional offerings, as well as determining how to improve current and new funding sources.

## 2.0 HISTORY

Many of the City of Bethlehem parks are from the depression era Works Progress Administration. The existing park system is comprised of many neighborhood and community parks that include passive and active recreation. The condition of the parks is deteriorating, and over the years several projects have been completed to bring new life to these community assets. City documents are available for review [here](#).

[\*The Comprehensive Parks and Pool Study\*](#) was completed in 2017. The intent of this study was to provide a detailed evaluation of the current conditions of recreation land, recreation facilities, buildings and pools, stormwater management and environmental responsibility. The study includes metrics on the state of the City’s recreational offerings, with emphasis of achieving ADA compliance. This creation of The Plan will complete one of the five enumerated short-term recommendations.

The recommendations and themes found in this study are consistent with [\*The City of Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan \(2008\)\*](#) related to safety, maintenance, and programming.

Park improvements and recommendations created as part of The Plan should ensure an equitable and accessible public recreation system that assists city officials in decision making. Further alignment with the Department of Public Works [\*2021 Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)\*](#), which denotes the importance of greenspaces and ways in which their

infrastructures can promote biodiversity and climate resilience. Two notable goals are to 1) Increase equity and accessibility in Bethlehem's green space and 2) Improve stormwater and floodplain management through green infrastructure, reductions in impervious surfaces, zoning changes, and well-designed landscaping.

As the City of Bethlehem reimagines its recreational lands, an important component is connectivity to the larger network. The [\*Beth Connects: A Trail Study \(2016\)\*](#) identifies these missing links that can be created to create a larger connected system. Furthermore, the plan speaks to the idea of economic development opportunities that are created when multimodal transit options are nearby, acting as a catalyst mechanism.

Northampton County's 2015 [\*Livable Landscapes Plan\*](#) will also align with the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. One of the goals of which is to "provide and maintain an exemplary park, trail and recreation system." This includes "improve existing and design new outdoor recreation facilities to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act," "conduct playground safety audits and address identified deficiencies," and "prepare and implement park and recreation plans."

[\*Lehigh Valley Return on Environment\*](#) was conducted by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission in 2014, and focuses on the economic benefits open space and recreational opportunities possess that help sustain the local economies. This study concludes that there are four ways economic value is generated through open spaces: "via revenue generation (e.g., sale of goods and services), wealth generation (e.g., higher property values and earnings from open space-related activities), increased tax revenues (e.g., increased property tax collections due to higher property values), and avoided costs (e.g., dollars that would be spent on the provision of environmental services, such as improving water quality and removing air pollution in the absence of protected open space)." This means we can expect an increase in property values of the homes adjacent to these recreational spaces, as well as bolster the local economy of Bethlehem.

### 3.0 STUDY AREA

A GIS map of all recreational offerings can be found [here](#). The study area includes over 30 city parks, a growing trail system, five swimming pools, splash park, 27-hole golf course, outdoor ice rink, skate plaza, tennis and pickleball courts, and disc golf course. With the goal of creating a larger Neighborhood Park System, the study area is citywide including connections to larger regional assets.

### 4.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

The consultant will demonstrate experience in recreation planning, determining the best way to implement and manage the creation of a successful recreation network of a scope, focus and complexity similar to what is desired for the City of Bethlehem. Consultants should demonstrate expertise in all aspects of recreation master planning, as well as experience in creating a "Neighborhood Park System" concept.

Our goal in this project is to create a well marketed, interconnected network of parks, trails, and programming that are equitable and accessible to people of all abilities.

- A prioritization of projects would be created as part of The Plan that informs decision makers short and long-term recommendations.
- Included in these recommendations should be an assessment of current recreational offerings and what groups are being served, and what groups may have additional needs, this would include staffing recommendations.
- A determination of current and future funding sources should accompany The Plan.

## 5.0 RESOURCES

Project guidance will be available through the City of Bethlehem’s Community and Economic Development and Public Works department. GIS information is available upon request. The project will be contracted by the City of Bethlehem and the primary point of contact for the project will be through the City of Bethlehem Bureau of Planning.

The City will provide the technical resources available at the time of the study along with the plans linked above. This includes a network of contacts, groups and social media.

## 6.0 SCOPE OF WORK

The final product will include:

- A comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan that will guide the decision-making and strategic planning of the rehabilitation and maintenance of recreational opportunities in the City by identifying recommendations for immediate improvement, coupled with long-term strategic goals of the City’s parks and recreational offerings.
  - Recommendations should consider equitable and accessible options that are for residents of all abilities.
  - Recommendations should consider additional staffing and programming needs to create the desired level of service.
  - Recommendations should include current and future funding sources that would achieve a profitable “Neighborhood Park System” concept.
- Align with the City’s 2021 Climate Action Plan which denoted the importance of greenspaces and ways in which their infrastructure can promote biodiversity and climate resilience. This includes a comprehensive look at providing environmental and stormwater management as components of The Plan.
  - As part of this effort, reducing capital costs by analyzing short-term and long-term upkeep and maintenance should be considered.
- Establishment of a “Neighborhood Park System” that achieves the strategies addressed in Northampton County’s Livable Landscapes Plan as well as Beth Connects: A Trail Study to create and unify an exemplary park, trail and recreation system. Each system could include at least the following recreational elements:

- Inclusive play experience
- ADA compliance
- Water play feature
- Passive park experience
- Gathering space
- Natural play experience
- Multi-purpose lawn
- Active recreation offering
- Geo-caching
- Communicate the economic value a larger network of recreation and open space opportunities can provide to the community as mentioned in the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission’s Return on Environment Study.
- Develop a timeline for the implementation of The Plan’s recommendations, as well as a reasonable schedule for updating the plan to address shifts in demographics and recreational trends.
- An analysis of costs related to implementing the recommendations identified in The Plan. This should include the cost additional staffing and programming.
- Community outreach in each of the four City neighborhoods (Central, North East, South and West) to determine the desires and opinions of the community.
  - This could include at least the following:
    - mailed surveys,
    - charettes,
    - pop up events,
    - open houses
  - The consultant should provide well-organized and directed activities, techniques and formats that will ensure an equitable, inclusive, open and proactive public participation process is achieved. These methods should solicit quality input from as many people as possible, including under-resourced populations and users and non-users of the services and facilities.
  - Consultant may also determine appropriate level of outreach based on prior experience in similar communities.
- Any new signage proposed should coordinate with current City design guidelines and theming.

## 7.0 DELIVERABLES

The final plan and all accompanying maps, designs or templates shall be presented in a professional and reproducible format. The following items shall also be included:

1. Two hard copies of the final document along with accompanying electronic copies in a PDF format that is accessible to individuals of all abilities.
2. Renderings of all graphics and designs.
3. All maps in an accessible format that includes the GIS shapefiles.
4. An outline of recommendations for immediate improvement, coupled with long-term strategic goals

5. Timeline of implementation, including budgetary costs for construction and upkeep
6. All documentation related to public participation efforts and attendance.
7. All information necessary to comply with any required grant guidelines and auditing requirements.

## 8.0 INQUIRIES

All inquiries to the RFP shall be submitted electronically to:

Corey Gray, Senior Planner  
Bureau of Planning and Zoning  
City of Bethlehem  
cgray@bethlehem-pa.gov

## 9.0 PROPOSAL CONTENT

At a minimum, all proposals shall respond to the following:

1. Description of firm organization and consulting team. Provide all contact information for the primary contact person, along with all of the people that will be a part of the consultant's team. Provide information about the size of the firm, years in business and any consulting specialty.
2. Description of Project team. Who will the team members be? What role will each team member play? What is their experience? List all contact information for each subconsultant.
3. Describe the firm's related experience. Present a summary of your parks and recreation master planning experience. Describe any related projects and how they relate to the project described here. Include examples from urban communities with a varied landscape and demographic similar to City of Bethlehem.
4. Project Management. Describe how the project will be managed. Who will be the City's primary contacts for this proposal? How will the consulting firm ensure coordination between our offices, your staff and our project partners?
5. A budget estimate of total costs and a breakdown of budget items.
6. What is the timeframe for the project? The proposal shall include a detailed breakdown of plan development phases.
7. Describe the team's experience with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) grant process.
8. References. List at least three references from projects similar to this proposed project.
9. Describe why your firm should be hired for this project.

Proposals shall be concise yet detailed and complete. There are no extra points for the volume of information. Proposals should include a table of contents for ease of reference.

## 10.0 SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be utilized to evaluate proposals and select a consultant.

1. Experience with similar Parks and Recreation Master Plan's in urban communities.
2. Experience of the personnel assigned to this project.
3. Innovation and creativity in the planning process including the approach to plan and design development, creating solutions to complex urban and neighborhood issues, innovation in design and ability to work with several partners.
4. Community outreach methods, varied and creative
5. Quality of proposal.
6. Project budget.

Funding for this project is available through state funds of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED) Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program Grant. All work must comply with all PA DCED guidelines and grant requirements. Act 13 authorizes the Commonwealth Financing Authority to award grants to eligible applicants for planning, acquisition, development, rehabilitation and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, parks and beautification projects.

## 11.0 OTHER ITEMS TO CONSIDER:

- Firms may be asked to present their capabilities to a review panel during an interview process prior to consultant selection.
- The cost of preparing, submitting and presenting proposals and subsequent presentations to a review panel are the sole expense of the consultant.
- The City of Bethlehem will evaluate all proposals and select the successful firm.
- The City of Bethlehem is not responsible for any costs incurred by prospective bidders in responding to this RFP.
- The City reserves the right to award the project in the best interests of the project and is not obligated to select the lowest priced proposal.