

Parks and Recreation



The Lehigh Canal towpath on Sand Island



■ Parks and Recreation Vision

Parks and recreation services are an important part of Bethlehem's quality of life. This chapter describes the City's approach to public recreation and recommends ways to improve Bethlehem's parks, trails and recreation programs. Bethlehem's goals for parks and recreation include the following:

- Provide enough attractive park land, improved trail corridors, and high-quality well-maintained recreation facilities to meet the needs of City residents, students and visitors.
- Maintain a comprehensive selection of recreation programs that are affordable and serve a wide variety of interests and abilities, including sports, social, creative and instructional programs.
- Operate a cost-efficient, full-service parks and recreation department that can continue coordinating current services and make adjustments, as needed, to respond to changing trends and demands.



Elmwood Park in Central Bethlehem

■ Parks and Recreation Overview

Bethlehem's park and trail system is extensive and diverse, despite the limited funds available to develop and maintain it. The City owns 39 park sites that encompass 568 acres. The Park Inventory table on a following page lists the size and location of each City park, plus the major recreation facilities found in each one. The inventory is keyed to maps of four areas of the City. The maps also show County parks, public school sites and selected other recreation sites in Bethlehem.

The City operates six pools: Clearview, Memorial, Stark, Saucon, Westside and Yosko. The Bethlehem Golf Club includes the 18-hole Monocacy Course, a 9-hole Executive Course, and a driving range. The Charles A. Brown Ice House on Sand Island provides space for a variety of community and cultural events.

A bridge over the Saucon Creek in Saucon Park





Three major trails exist or are under development, as shown on the map below:



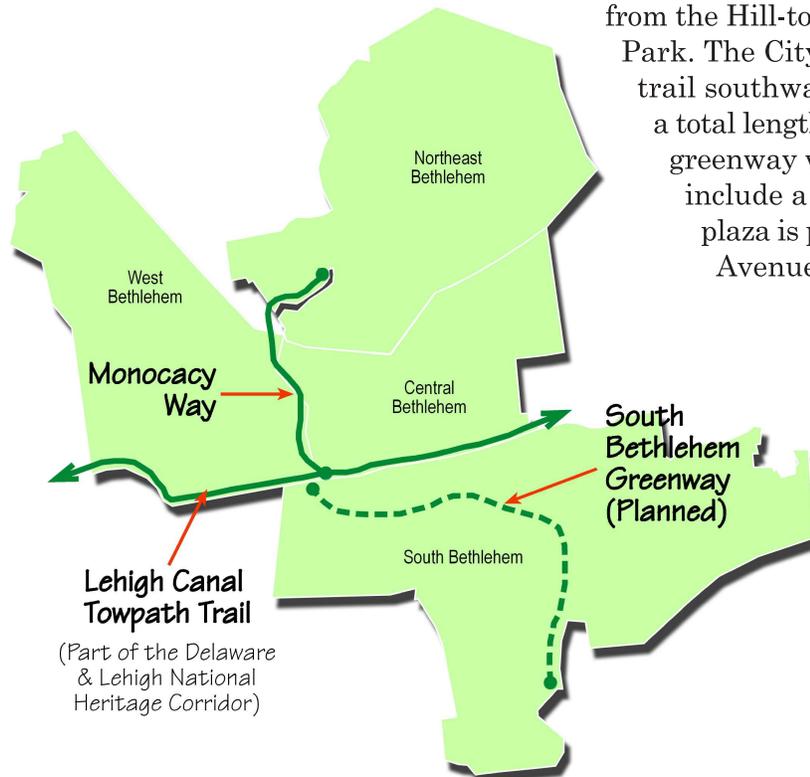
A section of the proposed South Bethlehem Greenway

The Lehigh Canal Towpath Trail - This 7.3-mile trail is situated on the towpath of the former Lehigh Canal and is part of the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. The City’s park on Sand Island is the approximate mid-point. From Sand Island, the trail connects with Allentown to the west and Freemansburg to the east. The trail route passes by several canal locks, a restored lock tender’s house and other historic attractions.

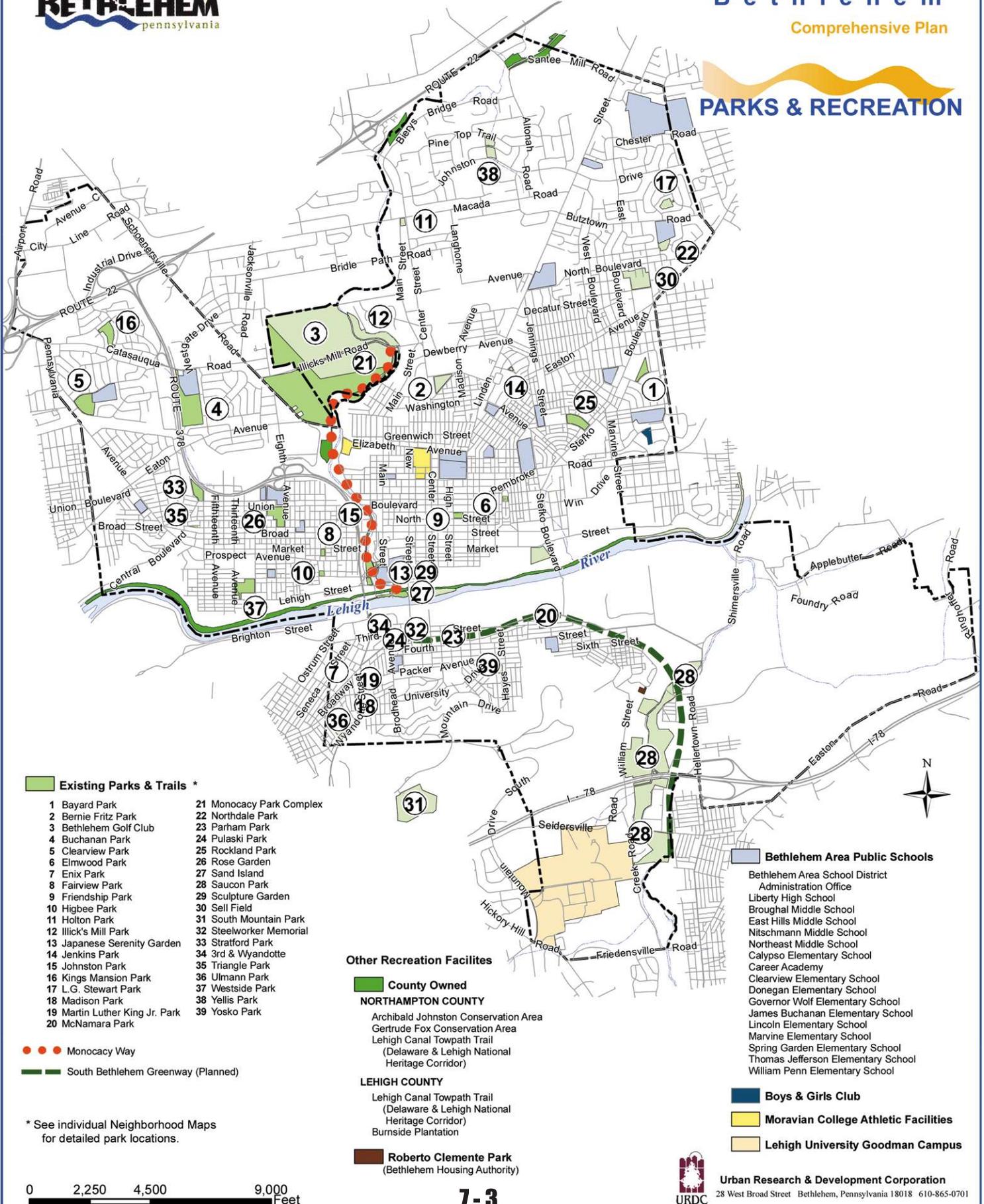
Monocacy Way - Monocacy Way runs along Monocacy Creek perpendicular to the Lehigh Canal Towpath Trail. It is a 3.0-mile trail that extends between Sand Island and Monocacy Park. Along the way, the trail crosses several roads, passes Bethlehem’s Colonial Industrial quarter, Burnside Plantation, Paint Mill Pond and Illick’s Mill, which is a historic structure located within Monocacy Park.

South Bethlehem Greenway - This new trail will strengthen older neighborhoods in South Bethlehem. It will also create an urban “green” connection to downtown, local neighborhoods, Saucon Park and, eventually to Hellertown and Lehigh’s Goodman Campus. The South Bethlehem Greenway will be a great recreational resource for residents, students and visitors. The

greenway is a former railroad bed extending from the Hill-to-Hill Bridge to Saucon Park. The City hopes to extend the trail southward to Hellertown for a total length of over 3.6 miles. The greenway will be landscaped and include a hard surface. A skate plaza is proposed near the Daly Avenue bridge.



PARKS & RECREATION



Existing Parks & Trails *

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Bayard Park | 21 Monocacy Park Complex |
| 2 Bernie Fritz Park | 22 Northdale Park |
| 3 Bethlehem Golf Club | 23 Parham Park |
| 4 Buchanan Park | 24 Pulaski Park |
| 5 Clearview Park | 25 Rockland Park |
| 6 Elmwood Park | 26 Rose Garden |
| 7 Enix Park | 27 Sand Island |
| 8 Fairview Park | 28 Saucon Park |
| 9 Friendship Park | 29 Sculpture Garden |
| 10 Higbee Park | 30 Sell Field |
| 11 Holton Park | 31 South Mountain Park |
| 12 Illick's Mill Park | 32 Steelworker Memorial |
| 13 Japanese Serenity Garden | 33 Stratford Park |
| 14 Jenkins Park | 34 3rd & Wyandotte |
| 15 Johnston Park | 35 Triangle Park |
| 16 Kings Mansion Park | 36 Ulmann Park |
| 17 L.G. Stewart Park | 37 Westside Park |
| 18 Madison Park | 38 Yellis Park |
| 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Park | 39 Yosko Park |
| 20 McNamara King | |

- ● ● Monocacy Way
- South Bethlehem Greenway (Planned)

* See individual Neighborhood Maps for detailed park locations.

Other Recreation Facilities

- County Owned**
- NORTHAMPTON COUNTY**
- Archibald Johnston Conservation Area
- Gertrude Fox Conservation Area
- Lehigh Canal Towpath Trail (Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor)
- LEHIGH COUNTY**
- Lehigh Canal Towpath Trail (Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor)
- Burnside Plantation
- Roberto Clemente Park** (Bethlehem Housing Authority)

Bethlehem Area Public Schools

- Bethlehem Area School District
- Administration Office
- Liberty High School
- Broughal Middle School
- East Hills Middle School
- Nitschmann Middle School
- Northeast Middle School
- Calypso Elementary School
- Career Academy
- Clearview Elementary School
- Donegan Elementary School
- Governor Wolf Elementary School
- James Buchanan Elementary School
- Lincoln Elementary School
- Marvine Elementary School
- Spring Garden Elementary School
- Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
- William Penn Elementary School

- Boys & Girls Club**
- Moravian College Athletic Facilities**
- Lehigh University Goodman Campus**

0 2,250 4,500 9,000 Feet



Existing Parks & Trails

CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOOD AREA

Other Recreation Facilities in this Neighborhood Area

- Existing Parks & Trails**
 - 1 Bayard Park
 - 6 Elmwood Park
 - 9 Friendship Park
 - 13 Japanese Serenity Garden
 - 15 Johnston Park
 - 25 Rockland Park
 - 27 Sand Island
 - 29 Sculpture Garden
- County Owned** (Northampton County)
 - Lehigh Canal Towpath Trail (Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor)
- Bethlehem Area Public Schools**
 - Bethlehem Area School District
 - Administration Office
 - Liberty High School
 - Northeast Middle School
 - Lincoln Elementary School
 - Marvine Elementary School
 - Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
 - William Penn Elementary School
- Boys & Girls Club**
- Moravian College Athletic Facilities**

- Existing Parks & Trails**
 - 1 Bayard Park
 - 6 Elmwood Park
 - 9 Friendship Park
 - 13 Japanese Serenity Garden
 - 15 Johnston Park
 - 25 Rockland Park
 - 27 Sand Island
 - 29 Sculpture Garden
- Monocacy Way**



Existing Parks & Trails

WEST NEIGHBORHOOD AREA



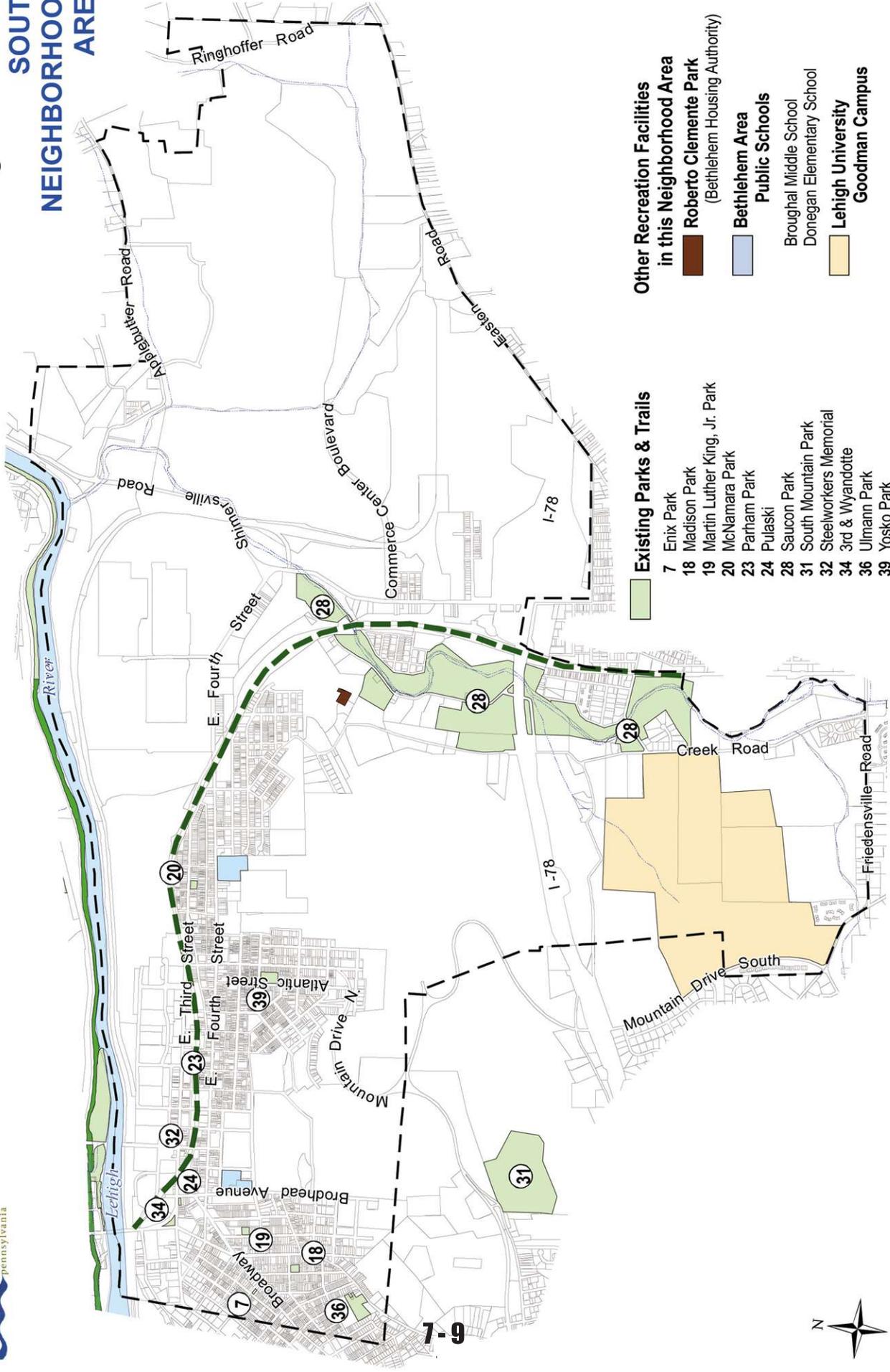
- Existing Parks & Trails**
- 4 Buchanan Park
 - 5 Clearview Park
 - 8 Fairview Park
 - 10 Higbee Park
 - 16 Kings Mansion Park
 - 26 Rose Garden
 - 33 Stratford Park
 - 35 Triangle Park
 - 37 Westside Park
- Monocacy Way

- Other Recreation Facilities in this Neighborhood Area**
- County Owned**
(Lehigh County)
- Lehigh Canal Towpath Trail (Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor)
 - Burnside Plantation
- Bethlehem Area Public Schools**
- Nitschmann Middle School
 - Calypso Elementary School
 - Career Academy
 - Clearview Elementary School
 - James Buchanan Elementary School



Existing Parks & Trails

SOUTH NEIGHBORHOOD AREA



Existing Parks & Trails

- 7 Enix Park
- 18 Madison Park
- 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Park
- 20 McNamara Park
- 23 Parham Park
- 24 Pulaski
- 28 Saucon Park
- 31 South Mountain Park
- 32 Steelworkers Memorial
- 34 3rd & Wyandotte
- 36 Ulmann Park
- 39 Yosko Park

Other Recreation Facilities in this Neighborhood Area

- Roberto Clemente Park (Bethlehem Housing Authority)
- Bethlehem Area Public Schools
- Broughal Middle School
- Donegan Elementary School
- Lehigh University
- Goodman Campus



South Bethlehem Greenway (Planned)



Existing Parks & Trails

NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD AREA



Existing Parks & Trails

- 2 Bernie Fritz Park
- 3 Bethlehem Golf Club
- 11 Holton Park
- 12 Illick's Mill Park
- 14 Jenkins Park
- 17 L.G. Stewart Park
- 21 Monocacy Park Complex
- 22 Northdale Park
- 30 Sell Field
- 38 Yellis Tract

●●●●● Monocacy Way

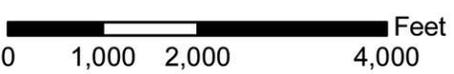
Other Recreation Facilities in this Neighborhood Area

County Owned
(Northampton County)

- Archibald Johnston Conservation Area
- Gertrude Fox Conservation Area

Bethlehem Area Public Schools

- East Hills Middle School
- Governor Wolf Elementary School
- Spring Garden Elementary School





Park Land and Facilities By Neighborhood Area

The following information summarizes the acres of City parkland that exist in each section of Bethlehem, not including greenways.

- #1 Northeast Bethlehem 198.1 acres (12.6 acres per 1,000 residents*)
- #2 South Bethlehem 147.4 acres (8.2 acres per 1,000 residents)
- #3 West Bethlehem 54.6 acres (2.9 acres per 1,000 residents)
- #4 Central Bethlehem 35.1 acres (1.9 acres per 1,000 residents)

* Not including the Bethlehem Golf Club.

Central Bethlehem is home to 8 City-owned parks. The largest is Sand Island, with 20 acres. West Bethlehem contains 9 City-owned parks, the largest being Buchanan Park with 21 acres. South Bethlehem features 12 City-owned parks. The largest are Saucon Park with 121 acres, and South Mountain Park with 20 acres. Northeast Bethlehem includes 10 City-owned parks. The 99-acre Monocacy Park is the largest City park in that sector.

The following table shows the number and type of recreation facilities available at City-owned parks in each neighborhood area.



Recreation Facilities by Neighborhood Area

Number of Park Sites With:	Central Bethlehem	West Bethlehem	South Bethlehem	Northeast Bethlehem	Total
Playground Equipment	4	8	7	5	24
Basketball Courts	4	7	4	3	18
Baseball Fields	1	1	1	4	7
Football / Soccer / Other Fields	0	1	1	2	4
Tennis Courts	1	2	0	1	4
Swimming Pools	0	2	2	2	6
Fishing	2	0	1	2	5
Picnic Facilities	2	0	2	2	6
Walking / Running Trails	2	1	1	2	6



Recreation Programs

Numerous organizations sponsor recreation programs and activities available to Bethlehem residents. Examples include sports leagues, private fitness centers, scouting troops, the Bethlehem Area School District, historic groups, churches, civic organizations, and drama clubs, among many others.

Bethlehem's Department of Parks & Public Property organizes a variety of recreation programs and special events. The aim of the City's recreation programming is to help serve people of all ages, both genders, and a wide spectrum of interests. City recreation programs include the following:

- A free supervised Summer playground program that includes arts & crafts, games, sports, and swim days, among other activities.
- A summer day camp for children at the ice rink in Monocacy Park.
- Lessons and clinics, such as for swimming, golf, tennis, ice skating and ice hockey.
- Organized adult leagues for softball, basketball, volleyball and tennis.
- Special recreation programs targeted to youth in the City's South Side. A South Side Coordinator organizes this program in cooperation with the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley. The program includes basketball, arts, dances, handball, mural painting, flag football, cleanups, community service and ice skating.
- Special events, such as the 4th of July Celebration, Music in the Park Concert Series and parades. The City is an active partner in Musikfest, a ten-day festival held every year. In 2007, Musikfest featured over 300 performers on 13 different indoor and outdoor stages. First Night Bethlehem (on New Year's Eve), Celtic Fest, BorinquenFest (celebrating Puerto Rican heritage), and Christkindlmarkt Bethlehem are other examples of community festivals and events hosted in Bethlehem with cooperation from the City.



Spectators at Borinquen Fest, an annual event at Saucon Park celebrating Puerto Rican heritage



The Bethlehem Police Department's park police work in coordination with the City's Department of Parks and Public Property to monitor and provide security at Bethlehem's parks. Six active block watch groups assist in these activities. Numerous individuals, groups and businesses participate in an Adopt-A-Park Program that helps to oversee and improve City-owned park sites.

■ Parks and Recreation Strategies

Recreation Lands and Facilities

1. Complete physical improvements on the western portion of Sand Island. These include enhancements now underway and implementation of longer-range projects, such as expanded picnic grounds there and cooperation with Lehigh University on construction of a boathouse for rowers.
2. Use Sand Island improvements as a stepping stone to strengthening the City's physical, economic and cultural connections to its Lehigh River waterfront. Sand Island's river access points, performing arts center, and historic canal offer creative opportunities to celebrate and re-energize Bethlehem's riverside heritage.
3. Fully implement plans to address Saucon Park's soil erosion and flooding problems. Follow up stream bank restoration and dam removal activities now underway with longer range improvements currently under consideration, such as regrading of playing fields, a new playing field, underdrains, relocation of a pedestrian bridge, and circulation enhancements.
4. Build trails on-site and off-site that will help connect Saucon Park to Hellertown via the South Bethlehem Greenway, and to various parts of Lehigh's Goodman Campus. The City also hopes longer range greenway connections can be developed to better link North Side and South Side locations.



Installation of new lighting on Sand Island



- 5.** Complete the development of the South Bethlehem Greenway in phases, as identified in the *South Bethlehem Greenway Master Plan*. Major steps in developing this well-landscaped, hard surface trail will include:
 - Constructing the greenway along the former railroad bed from near the Hill-to-Hill Bridge to Saucon Park.
 - Extending the trail southward from Saucon Park to Hellertown.
 - Building a skate plaza near the Daly Avenue bridge.
- 6.** In cooperation with other regional entities, the City should make the Lehigh Canal Towpath Trail and Monocacy Way easier to use and more accessible.
- 7.** Continue to evaluate how a trail could ultimately be built along the abandoned Lehigh and New England Railroad in Bethlehem and Allentown. The trail would extend from the Monocacy Creek near Burnside Plantation westward to Center City Allentown.
- 8.** As important as it is to create new park opportunities, the need to maintain and upgrade existing neighborhood parks is also crucial. Therefore, the City should complete a formal analysis of City-owned neighborhood parks to determine the following for each site:
 - The need to replace recreation facilities and equipment
 - The need for any access and/or internal circulation improvements
 - Safety considerations, such as the need for surveillance cameras and other techniques
 - Ways to improve park appearance through landscaping, signs and other means
- 9.** Consider constructing a new miniature golf facility at the Bethlehem Municipal Golf Course, which could attract a new audience to the site and generate revenues for the City's park system.

Playground equipment at Friendship Park



- 10.** Evaluate the feasibility of constructing one or more conveniently-located community centers in the City. These centers could feature recreation facilities, an indoor swimming pool, meeting rooms, game rooms and other attractions designed to serve people of all ages and people with many different interests.

Recreation Programs

- 11.** Use periodic surveys, public meetings and other communication techniques to ensure City-sponsored recreation programs continue to respond to changing trends and the changing recreation needs/preferences of local residents.
- 12.** Focus additional recreation programming on meeting the needs of at-risk youth, including more activities similar to those overseen by City's South Side Recreation Coordinator.

Recreation Funding and Implementation

- 13.** Expand the City's community partnership with local businesses, non-profits, school districts, neighboring municipalities and others to attract more capital and operating funds to the City's park and recreation budget.
- 14.** Enhance participation in the City's Adopt-a-Park program, under which businesses, non-profits, families and other groups help clean up and watch over certain parks.
- 15.** Seek conservation easements to protect environmentally sensitive lands and pedestrian easements that would allow the public the right to walk, hike and ride bicycles along a specific area, provided users follow pre-established rules. Land for creekside greenways is sometimes assembled with the help of these easements.
- 16.** Promote dedication, donation, and sponsorship opportunities (such as naming rights), through which institutions, private companies and private individuals can fund certain park improvements, such as shade trees, park benches, pavilions, and related enhancements.



Basketball courts on Sand Island



Rockland Park on Stefko Boulevard - one of several parks in Bethlehem's Adopt-a-Park program

