

# Community and Neighborhood Park Master Plans



*Recreation Drive Park*



*Sunset Hills Park*



*Economy Municipal Park*

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**PASHEK**  
ASSOCIATES  
a pennsylvania corporation  
January 31, 2003

Economy Borough  
Beaver County, Pennsylvania

## Community and Neighborhood Park Master Plans for:

# Recreation Drive Park Sunset Hills Park Economy Municipal Park

DCNR Project Number BRC-TAG-7-63

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# Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

**L**ast year, Economy Borough became interested in re-examining its community-wide recreation system in order to determine if the recreational needs of Borough residents were being met. Therefore, the Borough applied to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for a grant to prepare master plans for existing community parks. That grant was received in the Spring of 2002, and the Borough contracted with Pashek Associates, Ltd., a firm of landscape architects and community planners, to complete master plans for Sunset Hills, Recreation Drive, and Economy Municipal Parks.

The process of master planning includes analyzing the natural features such as topography, vegetation, and soils, as well as working with interested citizens to set recreation policies for future park development. This multi-layered approach, involving the community and its decision-makers, yields a long-range strategy for recreation. It is important to note, however, that the master plans developed through this study are frameworks for making decisions regarding the development of facilities at the three parks. The resulting master plans are flexible tools for planning, and the specific details of the design may be adjusted through the design process.

### Recreation Drive Park

The Recreation Drive Park site is located in the northeastern portion of Economy Borough, and is 2.978 acres in size. Existing facilities include:

- Two sand volleyball courts
- Two basketball courts
- Approximately sixteen unpaved parking spaces



Additionally, playground equipment including a three-bay swing and climber were audited for compliance with the American Society of Testing Materials “Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specifications for Public Playground Safety.” (ASTM 1487) This audit indicated that both pieces of equipment present a variety of hazards, and should be removed immediately.

After considering the opportunities and constraints of the site, this study recommends the following additional facilities be developed:

- Playground
- Flexible open space
- Shelters

- Horseshoe pit
- Accessible trail loop
- Restroom facility
- Paved parking lot

The proposed improvements for the Recreation Drive Park site are estimated to cost approximately \$807,000. This study recommends the proposed improvements be constructed in three phases, based on the financial capabilities of the Borough and the availability of grants.

The Sunset Hills Park site is located in the north-central portion of Economy Borough, and is 2.340 acres in size. Existing facilities include:

- One shelter
- One baseball field
- One basketball post
- Approximately four paved parking spaces, off-site

Additionally, playground equipment including a climber, swings, slide, whirl, see-saw, and spring rockers, were audited for compliance with the American Society of Testing Materials “Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specifications for Public Playground Safety.” (ASTM 1487) This audit indicated that these pieces of equipment present a variety of hazards, and should be removed immediately.

After considering the opportunities and constraints of the site, this study recommends the following additional facilities be developed:

- Playground
- Flexible open space
- Shelter and gazebo
- Multi-purpose court
- Accessible trail loop
- Restroom facility
- Paved parking lot

The proposed improvements for the Recreation Drive Park site are estimated to cost approximately \$715,000. This study recommends the proposed improvements be constructed in three phases, based on the financial capabilities of the Borough and the availability of grants.

## Sunset Hills Park



# Executive Summary

## Economy Municipal Park

The Economy Municipal Park site is located in the north-central portion of Economy Borough, and is 34.44 acres in size. Existing facilities include:



- One baseball field
- One basketball court
- Two tennis courts
- One sand volleyball court
- One shelter
- Concession Stand
- Borough facilities including: Public Works Facility, Municipal Building, Community Center, and Police Station
- Parking areas

After considering the opportunities and constraints of the site, this study recommends the following additional facilities be developed:

- Community playground
- Aggressive skate area
- Deck hockey rink
- Tennis court(s)
- Shelters
- Scenic overlook
- Accessible trail loop
- Accessible nature trail
- Mountain bicycling trail
- Hiking trail
- Restroom facility
- Paved parking lots

The proposed improvements for the Recreation Drive Park site are estimated to cost approximately \$2,875,000. This study recommends the proposed improvements be constructed in six phases, based on the financial capabilities of the Borough and the availability of grants.

# Chapter 1

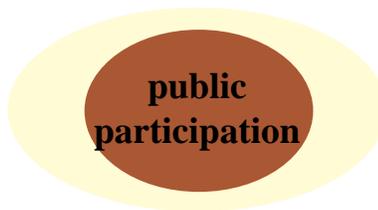
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Community Background

## Community Background

Where are we now?



Where do we want to be?



How do we get there?



Last year, Economy Borough became interested in re-examining its community-wide recreation system in order to determine if the recreational needs of Borough residents were being met. Therefore, the Borough applied to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for a grant to prepare master plans for their existing community parks. That grant was received in the Spring of 2002, and the Borough contracted with Pashek Associates, Ltd., a firm of landscape architects and community planners, to complete master plans for Sunset Hills, Recreation Drive, and Economy Municipal Parks.

This study provides the Borough with a framework for making decisions regarding the development of facilities at the three parks. It also recommends facilities identified through the public input process, as well as existing and future recreational needs. The process of master planning includes analyzing the natural features such as topography, vegetation, and soils, and working with interested citizens to set recreation policies for future park development. This multi-layered approach, involving the community and its decision-makers, yields a long-range strategy for recreation. It is important to note, however, that the master plans developed through this study are flexible tools for planning. The specific details of the design, and the final locations of facilities, may be adjusted through the design process.

The development of thoughtful master site plans can also maximize the community's financial involvement. Areas designed for active recreation are developed where costs can be minimized; careful planning can reduce operating and maintenance costs. Sound master plans for the Borough parks will also have a greater chance of being funded by various agencies, including DCNR.

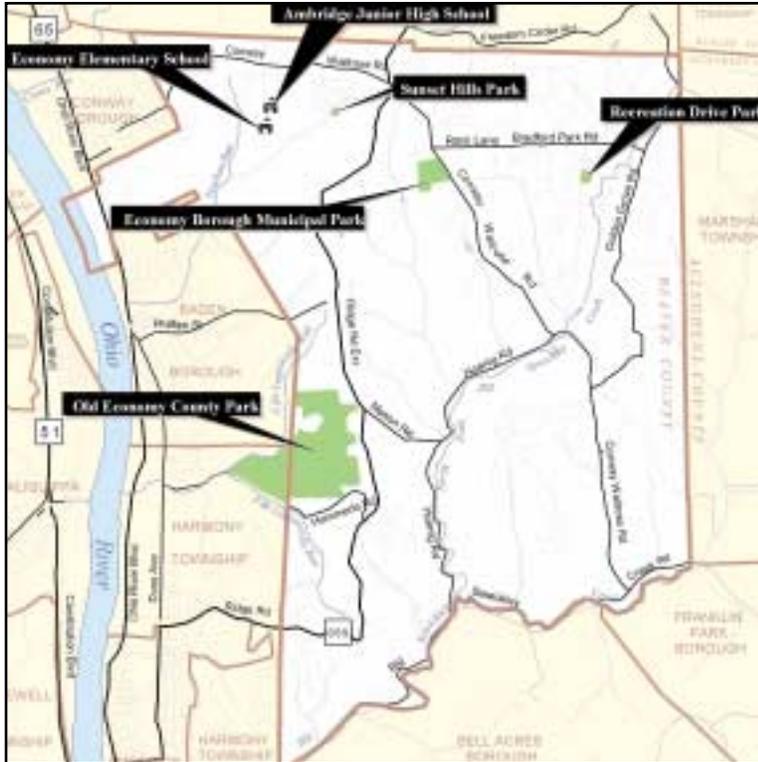
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### History

Economy Borough is located approximately twenty-three miles northwest of Pittsburgh. Covering nearly twenty square miles, it is bounded by New Sewickley Township to the north, Butler County to the east, Allegheny County to the south, and Harmony, Baden, and Conway to the west.

As part of Beaver County, the early history of the Borough parallels that of the rest of the County. At the time of the American Revolution, various Native American tribes inhabited the region, including Delaware, Shawnee, and Ohio River Iroquois. Later, in the 1790's, German families from Alsace, Wittenburg, and Bavaria settled the area. In the beginning of the

# Community Background



**Economy Borough**

19th century, the State began planning for Beaver County, which was formed from portions of Allegheny and Washington Counties. The new County was officially recognized on March 12, 1800.

The evolution of Economy Borough into a distinct entity began in 1824, with the founding of Old Economy Village by the Harmony Society. Within two years, the area's population had increased

## **The Harmony Society**

In 1804, the Harmony Society emigrated to America from southwest Germany to escape religious persecution. With their leader, George Rapp, nearly 800 farmers and craftsmen settled in Butler County, Pennsylvania, in the town of Harmony. Within ten years, they had founded a second town of Harmony, known today as New Harmony, in Posey County, Indiana. By 1824, the Harmonists had returned to Pennsylvania, founding their third town, Old Economy Village, in Beaver County.

Recognized worldwide for their religious devotion, the simple, pietistic lifestyle of the Harmony Society was based on the early Christian Church. Living was communal, with all material possessions turned over to the Society at the time of membership. All members worked for the Society as a whole, and received what was needed for comfortable living.

The craftsmanship and entrepreneurial skills of the Harmonists led to economic prosperity for the Society. Agriculture and industry were placed side-by-side, an arrangement viewed by Thomas Jefferson to be an ideal plan for the economic and political future of America. New technologies were adopted, and, by 1825, the Harmony Society had built textile factories powered by steam, as well as shops for tanners, hatters, cabinetmakers, potters, and linen weavers. The society even perfected the manufacturing of silk, receiving gold medals in exhibitions in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

After the death of George Rapp in 1847, the Harmonists turned to business ventures such as railroads and oil production, to no avail. By the beginning of the 20th century, few Harmonists survived and, in 1905, the Society was dissolved. Six acres of their original holdings were acquired by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and are administered as a National Historic Landmark by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

# Community Background



**Harmony Society Woolen Mill**

sufficiently to warrant the formation of a new township, Economy, formed from the southern part of New Sewickley Township. The Harmonists began to develop extensive manufacturing facilities on their lands, and a second township, Harmony, was formed from a portion of Economy Township in 1851. Economy Township, in its smaller state, remained a sparsely populated community.



**Beaver County Oil Industry**

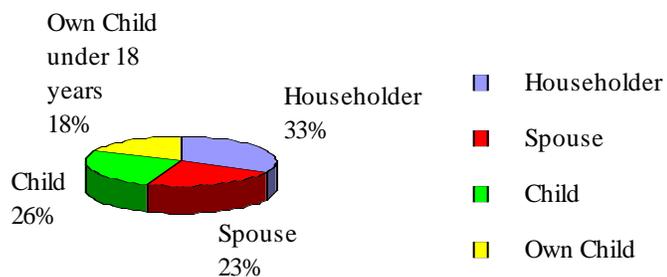
In 1890, the discovery of the Economy oil field brought great prosperity to the Township. More than 100 wells were drilled in the twelve square-mile field, producing as much as 45,000 barrels of oil a day. Many of these wells contained significant pressure to maintain flow without being pumped. New boarding houses, livery stables, shops, and stores were constructed, as well as drilling rigs and related shacks and buildings. By 1910, however, the oil boom was already in decline and the North Shore Railroad abandoned its spur line to the area as an unprofitable venture.

With the increase in population following World War II, Economy Township residents petitioned for Borough status. The new form of government was adopted January 1, 1958.

## Demographics

Over the past ten years, the population of Economy Borough has declined 1.6%, from 9,519 to 9,363. However, the total number of households has increased 6.7%, from 3,305 to 3,528. Therefore, the average number of persons per household has dropped from 2.88 to 2.58 over the past ten years. The following graph shows those households organized by relationship:

### Household Relationships



# Community Background

In terms of age, the Borough's population of residents under 18 has decreased, with respect to the total population, by 4.2%. Additionally, the number of individuals over 65 increased by 2.5% and the 19 to 64 population increased by 1.7% over the past ten years. Given these changes, the median age has risen in the Borough, from 35.4 to 41.6.

## 1990 vs. 2000 Comparison to Total Population

	1990	2000	Difference
Under 18	26.4%	22.2%	-4.2%
19 to 64	62.5%	64.2%	1.7%
Over 65	11.1%	13.6%	2.5%

The total number of Borough residents under the age of 18 has decreased by 17.4% from 1990 to 2000. In addition, during the same time period, the 19 to 64 population saw a minor increase of 1.1% and the number of residents over 65 increased by 20.7%. These statistics indicates that a major population shift has occurred in the community.

## 1990 vs. 2000 Comparison to Age Segment

Segment	1990	2000	Difference
Under 18	2514	2076	-17.4%
19 to 64	5946	6009	1.1%
Over 65	1059	1278	20.7%

Regarding the recreational needs of Economy Borough, the 17.4% reduction in the 18 and under population seems to indicate a decrease in demand for play opportunities and athletic fields. However, the corresponding 20% increase in the senior population indicates that there has been an increase in demand for recreation facilities and programs that meet the needs of that age group.

## Existing Park System

The recommendations of this study are intended to provide the optimal level of service to Borough residents. To do this, however, it is important first to understand the different ways in which people use recreation facilities. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) organizes parks into a "hierarchy" which defines their functions and the types of activities they should accommodate. According to the NRPA, there are generally five basic classifications of parks. These include:

### REGIONAL RESERVES

The regional reserve park is a facility designed more for the conservation of natural resources than recreational development.

# Community Background

This type of park typically accommodates activities such as nature study, trail uses, camping, boating, and fishing. Regional reserve parks are considerably larger than regional/metropolitan parks, but have the same 40 to 50-mile radius service areas.



**Old Economy Park**

The Beaver County Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan classifies Old Economy Park, located in the municipalities of Economy Borough and Harmony Township, as a regional reserve. This park, nearly 400 acres in size, is a more active recreation area due to its large pool facility. Six shelters, one ballfield, one basketball court, and several playground areas are located on site, and tennis lessons are held at the two courts located in this park.

However, its location was selected for its convenient access for County residents, and can be considered remote in respect to the residential areas of the Borough.

### REGIONAL/METROPOLITAN FACILITIES

This type of facility generally serves communities within one hour driving time. These parks accommodate many types of outdoor activities, some of which may require large amounts of land or special facilities, such as special events, swimming, boating, hiking, camping, and bicycling.

No regional/metropolitan facilities exist in Economy Borough.

### COMMUNITY PARKS

This park type serves a large percentage of the local population. Although some people may be able to walk to a community park, most users would arrive by automobile or bicycle. Because of the travel time for most people to reach the park, it becomes a "special destination," and its features and facilities reflect this. Facilities within a community park accommodate several types of activities, and park acreage is usually adequate to provide ample room for large facilities (such as swimming pools or ball fields,) group activities, and solitary pursuits (such as hiking or bird watching.) Thus, a community park is truly a focus for the community.



**Economy Municipal Park**

Economy Municipal Park, included in this study, can be classified as a community park. This site will be discussed further in Chapter 3: Inventory and Analysis.

### NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

This type of park serves a very specific purpose. Users can generally be expected to walk to a neighborhood park. Because they are quickly and easily reached, their use tends to be more

## Community Background

casual and spontaneous. These parks are only large enough to accommodate a few activities and possibly a small amount of open space, which may especially benefit a densely populated neighborhood. Equipment and facilities may be specifically geared toward children, especially young children (in many neighborhoods, they form the majority of users.) These parks serve as a focus for small, individual areas, generally  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile in size.

Recreation Drive and Sunset Hills Parks, included in this study, can be classified as neighborhood parks. These two sites will be discussed further in Chapter 3: Inventory and Analysis.

An additional parcel of land exists in the Ridgewood Plan that may be classified as a neighborhood park. This parcel is comprised of a hillside that is too steep for the development of recreational facilities and, as such, has not been included in this master planning study.

### SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Individual sports fields, sports field complexes, or facilities geared toward one type of use, such as a racquet club or fairgrounds, exemplify special use facilities. This type of facility is not typically located within a park. Whether privately or publicly owned, this type of facility serves as a “unique destination.”

No special use facilities exist in Economy Borough.

### SCHOOL DISTRICT FACILITIES

In addition to the five classifications of parks provided by the NRPA, school district facilities fill an important recreational role in the community. These facilities allows the community to expand its recreational opportunities in an efficient manner. School district facilities perform in a number of capacities, including neighborhood parks or athletic fields, and complement other open spaces in a community. Generally, both the school district and the park system benefit from shared use of these facilities.

There are two School District facilities in use in Economy Borough: Ambridge Area Junior High School and the new Economy Elementary School. These facilities offer a total of eight ballfields, one soccer field, one soccer / football field, a playground, and a track and field facility.

There are two additional elementary schools in the Borough



**Recreation Drive Park**



**Sunset Hills Park**

# Community Background

which have been or are in the process of being closed. Recreational facilities at these locations are not being maintained by the Borough and have not been examined in the course of this study.

Hierarchy of Parks						
	Regional Reserve	Regional / Metropolitan Facility	Community Park	Neighborhood Park	Special Use Facility	School District Facility
Old Economy Park	✓					
Economy Municipal Park			✓			
Recreation Drive Park				✓		
Sunset Hills Park				✓		
Ambridge Area Junior High School						✓
Economy Elementary School						✓

## Study Impetus

The Borough recently became interested in re-examining its community-wide recreation system in order to determine if the recreational needs of Borough residents were being met. This decision was influenced by several factors:

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The Borough has experienced a shift in population, with a decrease in the under 18 age-group and an increase in the over 65 age-group. In terms of recreation, this shift indicates that there may be a decrease in the need for active athletic areas and an increase in the need for passive recreation opportunities, such as trails. Economy Borough is interested in developing master plans for the three Borough parks in order to provide these activities in an organized manner consistent with the recreational needs of the community.

### EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

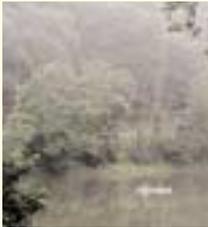
Currently, each of Economy Borough’s three parks are limited in scope. Though Old Economy Park does meet some of the recreational needs of the community, its location was selected for convenience to Beaver County residents. The park is fairly

# Community Background

remote, respective to the Borough’s primary residential areas, and does not diminish the need for recreational opportunities in the Borough.

In all three of the parks, the majority of the existing playground equipment was installed in the 1960’s and does not meet current safety standards. The equipment was removed from Economy Municipal Park because of its age and non-compliance with safety standards. During the course of this study, the remaining equipment will be examined in order to determine how best to resolve the issue of safety.

Additionally, the existing Borough parks are currently lacking in accessible recreation for the nearly 300 mobility-impaired residents of the community. Through this study, appropriate planning will result in the development of recreational opportunities for all residents of the community.

<p><b>Environmental Benefits</b></p>			<p><b>Economic Benefits</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean water and air</li> <li>• Preservation of wildlife</li> <li>• Reduce pollution</li> <li>• Protect ecosystems</li> <li>• Provide a place to enjoy nature's beauty</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases tourism</li> <li>• Enhances land and property value</li> <li>• Business retention</li> <li>• Revenue generation</li> <li>• Reduces vandalism and crime</li> </ul>
<p><b>BENEFITS OF RECREATION, PARKS &amp; OPEN SPACE</b></p>			
<p><b>Community Benefits</b></p>			<p><b>Personal Benefits</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces crime and delinquency</li> <li>• Connects families</li> <li>• Supports youth</li> <li>• Offers lifelines for elderly</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces stress</li> <li>• Live longer</li> <li>• Create balance between work and play</li> <li>• Eliminates boredom and loneliness</li> </ul>

# Community Background