

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND

A. Plan Purpose and Goals

A comprehensive recreation plan offers a municipality or region an all-inclusive overview of what types of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and opportunities are available in the project area and provides recommendations to help guide parks and recreation planning and decision-making over a 10 to 20 year time frame. Clarion Borough is undertaking its first-ever comprehensive recreation plan, a result of a number of previous planning initiatives that have identified needs and opportunities in relation to recreation. In fact, the 1986 Borough Comprehensive Plan recommended that the Borough implement a comprehensive recreational policy and program to best use its existing resources.

At just over 6,000 residents, the Borough currently oversees the Paul A. Weaver Community Park as well as the Clarion Borough Municipal Pool; however, there are a number of recreational facilities available within a short distance, such as state parks and forests, state game lands, golf courses, and municipal parks in adjacent communities that contribute to the overall parks and recreation network. In particular, the availability of the Clarion River Water Trail, North Country National Scenic Trail, and the Clarion Highlands Trail make the Borough a recreation hub with unique opportunities to capitalize upon the tourism generated as a result of these facilities.

B. General Information and Community Background

At its base, the Clarion Borough Comprehensive Recreation Plan will provide a snapshot of the existing conditions including, but not limited to, the history and setting of the community, demographic and socio-economic features (population trends – past and projected, age, race, gender, income, etc.); overview of current and projected land use patterns; current and proposed recreation facilities; open space, natural areas, waterways, historic and cultural sites. Mackin will also update this information with more recent data when available.

Clarion Borough Comprehensive Recreation Plan (1996)

- » Mackin will review the previous comprehensive parks and recreation plan to determine what recommendations are still relevant and why they were not implemented to assist in developing realistic recommendations for the future.

Clarion Borough Comprehensive Plan (1986)

- » While the Clarion Borough Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1986, we will work with the Borough and project Study Committee to identify the reasons why some, if any, recommendations were not implemented. We believe it is important to understand the obstacles to implementation in order to lead to a successful plan.

Lumber Heritage Management Action Plan (2001)

- » Mackin will review the background data presented in the report and use pertinent data to provide develop strong recommendations for continued implementation of previous reports and findings.

PA Wilds Planning Study (2007)

- » As a part PA Wilds, Clarion Borough is included in one of the “key investment areas” due to its location along the Clarion River Water Trail and near Cook Forest and Clear Creek Forest State Parks. Mackin will include pertinent information and recommendations relative to Clarion County for inclusion in the Borough’s Comprehensive Recreation Plan.

Clarion River Recreation Assessment (2007)

- » While Clarion Borough has limited access to the Clarion River, the presence of the water trail offers a number of recreation opportunities that can be capitalized upon and Mackin will identify and incorporate these opportunities into the Comprehensive Recreation Planning process.

Section 4: Project Approach

Clarion County Natural Heritage Inventory (in progress)

- » Mackin will work with the WPC as well as Clarion University to include the most recent inventory, analysis, and recommendations for natural areas located in or near Clarion Borough.

C. Mission Statement and Goals for Parks and Recreation

Mackin will work with the municipal officials, the Recreation Committee, the Project Study Committee, and the public to prepare a Mission Statement and corresponding goals for Clarion Borough regarding parks and recreation. As the entity that will likely be responsible for implementation of the plan, it is vital that the Recreation Committee not only understand its mission going forward, but also support it. The Mission Statement will outline and identify the most important values according to the residents and other stakeholders.

D. Public Participation Process

To ensure that the public is engaged to the fullest extent possible, our team includes a public involvement specialist (Olszak) and a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) to assist us in gathering that input. Our approach will ensure that Clarion receives a comprehensive recreation plan that is publicly vetted and supported and will consist of the following levels:

- » Project Study Committee – Monthly Meetings
- » Stakeholder Interviews – A maximum of fifteen (15) stakeholder interviews.
 - › Borough Council Recreation Committee
 - › Borough Planning Commission
 - › State Park Manager of Cook Forest State Park
 - › North Country Trail Association (NCTA) – Clarion County Chapter
 - › Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy—Baker Trail
 - › Clarion Highlands Trail
 - › Clarion County Branch YMCA
 - › Clarion Area School District
 - › Clarion University
- » Public Meeting #1—held within first few months to introduce project and gather input
- » Public Meeting #2—held at end of project to present draft plan recommendations
- » Website – We also recommend creating a website (to be hosted at Mackin or on the Clarion Borough site) to post project information, schedule, meetings, draft recommendations, etc.
- » Quarterly Reports – Mackin will prepare reports on a quarterly basis outlining the project’s progress for submission to the Borough and DCNR.
- » Adoption – We will provide the Borough will all the tools necessary to adopt the plan as an amendment to their Comprehensive Plan (such as legal advertisements, resolutions, 45-day comment review submittals, etc.).

CHAPTER 2: INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

A. Administration

Mackin will document the current recreation administration; the Clarion Borough Council Recreation Committee and any agreements or partnerships in existence. We will conduct an analysis that will examine the effectiveness and capacity of the Committee, the ability to involve the public with long-range planning efforts, the ability to work cooperatively with other public agencies, community groups, and businesses, and the effectiveness of existing procedures and policies. In particular, we will examine the following:

- » Current recreation administration
 - › Borough Council Recreation Committee
 - › Agreements/partnerships with community organizations
 - › Cooperative efforts between the Borough, Clarion Area School District and Clarion University,
 - › Other cooperative efforts with neighboring recreation providers, support groups, area businesses, etc.
 - › Public relations and marketing efforts such as flyers, websites, etc. to promote the Borough's park and recreational facilities, services and programs.
- » The Borough's policies and procedures that administer the general operation of the recreation and park functions – including the use of facilities, non-resident participation, policy manuals, risk management program, record keeping, etc.
- » Opportunities for the public to get involved with planning efforts for parks and recreation within the Borough. This may include paper or web surveys, public meetings, focus groups, etc.
- » Priority Needs

B. Borough Personnel

- » Organizational chart
 - › Departments/staff responsible for management, oversight, maintenance and operations
 - › Job descriptions and roles/responsibilities
 - › Volunteers
- » Priority Needs

C. Facility and Open Space Inventory and Analysis

- » Borough Inventory
 - › Location/acreage
 - › Number/type of facilities & condition
 - › Recommended improvements to meet safety/ADA guidelines
- » Regional Inventory—map of facilities in 15-mile radius and chart including:
 - › Name/owner
 - › Acreage

Section 4: Project Approach

- › Number/type of facilities
- › Condition of facilities
- » Priority Needs
 - › Parks—comparison to National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards
 - › Facilities—comparison to National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards
 - › Trails/pathways
 - › Open space/greenways

D. Facilities and Equipment Maintenance

- » Inventory of maintenance (parks, facilities, equipment)
- » Analysis of maintenance program
- » Priority Needs

E. Recreation Programs

- » Current programs offered
 - › Borough Programs
 - › Regional Programs
- » Partnership opportunities
- » Priority Needs

F. Financing

- » Borough funding of recreation
 - › General fund/budget analysis
 - › Grants
 - › Donations
 - › Rental income
 - › User fees
- » Priority Needs

CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A. Recommendations

The only way that the Clarion Borough Comprehensive Recreation Plan will be successful is if specific recommendations are developed to address the unique needs of the Borough and that those same recommendations are publicly supported. Mackin will work with Clarion Borough, the Recreation Committee, Project Study Committee, and all other stakeholders to develop recommendations that address documented needs in all areas of parks and recreation:

- » Administration
- » Personnel
- » Facilities and open space
- » Programming
- » Maintenance
- » Financing

B. Implementation

An implementation plan for the recommendations will be developed as follows:

- » Goal
- » Strategy
 - › Responsible party
 - › Potential partners
 - › Priority level
 - › Timeframe
 - › Opinion of probable cost

C. Executive Summary

After the final draft plan has been reviewed by the Study Committee, the Borough, County, DCNR, and other participating parties, Mackin will prepare an executive summary. This summary will include a map to graphically represent the appropriate recommendations from the plan as well as a summary of the planning process and the high priority recommendations. The executive summary will be included in the beginning portion of the plan and will be designed to serve as a stand-alone document and be the basis of on-going public education and citizen involvement efforts.

N. Draft Plan

A draft plan will be presented to Clarion Borough, the Project Study Committee, DCNR, and DCED for review during the 45-day public comment period. In addition, in accordance with the PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), copies of the draft plan will be sent to all neighboring municipalities, Clarion Area School District, and Clarion County Planning Commission for review and comment. After all comments are received, Mackin will revise the draft plan per comments submitted and send a final draft plan for approval. No action will be taken by Borough Council until DCNR reviews and approves the final draft plan.

O. Final Products

- » Clarion Borough—20 color bound copies, one unbound copy & 5 CDs
- » DCNR—3 hard copies, 1 CD