

Eldred Township, with the population of approximately 3,000, according to the US Census Bureau (Data Set: 2005-2009), is a vital link to connect our entire region, as identified as one of the major goals of the Monroe County Open Space Plan. One of the most historical elements of Eldred Township's borders is a part of the Appalachian Trail, a high priority of the County Natural Heritage Inventory for open space recreation, which runs along the ridge of the beautiful Blue Mountain. A natural migration corridor for hawks, falcons, eagles, songbirds and Monarch butterflies, the Appalachian Trail provides protection for sustaining diversity of many plants and other wildlife. Directly on the other southern side of this Mountain, is the large community of Allentown/Bethlehem, where many of our visitors and hikers originate from. On the eastern edge, Ross Township, which is part of the CJER (Chestnuthill, Jackson, Eldred, Ross) Region, helps connect our community to the larger part of Monroe County and our county seat, Stroudsburg. To the north, Eldred Township meets with our growing school district, Pleasant Valley and the ever growing, changing, and developing Brodheads ville, in Chestnuthill Township. This community has many ties to Eldred Township, as many of our residents travel there for daily good and services. Eldred Elementary, a part of the Pleasant Valley School District and a potential YMCA site, is located in central Kunkletown. Eldred Township also partnered with Chestnuthill, Ross, and Polk Township to help establish the West End Regional Park. Following the major highway in our area, State Route 209, to the west, is Polk Township. Polk township helps connect us to historical towns such as Palmerton, Lehigh ton, and Jim Thorpe, not to mention their popular visitation spot, Beltzville and Hickory Run State Parks .

The Mock Park Tot Lot is an important first step in the development of the public park, as it provides access to the property that the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Monroe County Open Space Bond funded in 2006. It is also important because toddler's 2-5 years do not have access to any other form of local community park. Although several sport and ball fields exist and are available for organized group use upon private grounds, none are compliant with current ADA accessibility standards nor do they contain facilities specifically oriented to very young children.

The Mock Park fits into the overall park system by virtue of its central location between the other parks, its combination of potential active and passive facilities, and its inclusion of over a ¼ mile length of frontage along both sides of the Princess Run. This riparian stream frontage provides a portion of a link to the Chestnut Ridge Greenway Corridor which is part of the 2001 Monroe County Open Space Plan. This plan was created was created in order to project the growth occurring in our region and to plan public facilities in accordance to population growth factors. With the influx of new residents, the need to preserve and protect our High Quality streams, such as the Princess Run, floodplains, and sensitive areas of steep slope, while providing public parks close to home, and connecting our communities, are important to our future. Many of these areas are protected in the Mock Park Plan, as well as providing a prime greenway connection.

As a matter of background, the West End Open Space and Recreation Plan was prepared and adopted by the West End Townships of Chestnuthill, Eldred and Ross, to utilize the funds created by the Monroe County Open Space Bond Issue. The Plan was to provide for protection of valuable open space with unique characteristics, a Recreational Trail plan, that links our communities, and a Passive

Recreation and Natural Area plan, to create a greenway along the Buckwa Creek. The Mock Park Property was purchased to further the goals and objectives of this planning document. As part of the public participation portion of the West End Open Space planning effort, a public opinion survey was sent to 1200 households. Of Eldred Township respondents, the most needed facilities were 50.5% for playgrounds and 30.0% for nature trails. Many public meetings were also held, to help develop the Mock Park Master Plan, approved in July, 2010, at the Eldred Township Municipal Building. Input was also gathered from representatives from sports organizations, Girl and Boy Scouts, emergency service providers, school, church, service groups, and others.

The Mock Park Master Plan also promotes the 2006 Joint Comprehensive Plan for the CJER Region. In this joint venture, in compliance with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Chestnuthill, Jackson, Eldred, and Ross recommends that the Townships provide for public areas, among the region, through the provision of open space and greenways, as well as protect natural resource lands, such as ridgelines and stream corridors. The Regional Plan also encourages the preservation of historic places, while implementing strategies for Smart Growth type development. Historic places can provide tourism opportunities, while connecting us to the past, emphasize a sense of community and provide aesthetic value.

The Mock Park advances the goals of the PA Outdoor Recreation Plan by providing a potential greenway to many of the surrounding communities. The "Tot Lot" will be open and free to the public to provide much needed exercise for our communities' children, free from traffic concerns. Instilling the love of nature, at an early age, with a close-to-home park, will also help protect our future. As our future leaders, our children of today will be the protectors of our land, water, and air tomorrow. The development of the Mock Park may also attract new residents, visitors and businesses, as many want to be located near well planned communities and parks.

The proposed Tot Lot Development is located above the farmhouse and stream, on an approximately twenty-four (24) acre field, currently being farmed. Due to some slope limitations, tiered parking, stormwater management, and landscape buffering will help to minimize runoff. The removed topsoil will be used to plant native evergreen trees, flowering trees and shrubs to provide beautiful, seasonal color for homes adjacent to the parking lot. Rain gardens will also be added, as needed, along sloping banks. Two (2) ADA parking spaces will be included in the twenty (20) proposed parking spaces, constructed thirteen-foot (13') wide and twenty-foot (20') deep with pervious aggregate. Three (3) additional acres are reserved for a family pavilion, a small informal ball field, and the Tot Lot. The fields adjacent to the Tot Lot will continue to be farmed, until needed for natural meadows, butterfly gardens, and walking trails with interpretive signage.

The remaining park will be undisturbed, about 90%, with only .66 acres of impervious cover, upon completion of the community pavilion. Signage, with the DCNR logo, will be erected for visitor information, in appropriate areas, along the natural walking trails, as well as preserving and protecting sensitive areas, such as the natural spring and flood plain. The use of native plants for landscape buffers, with the conjunction of rain gardens, will instill a beautiful, healthy environment for both human and nature. Mature, healthy native species will remain undisturbed.

There are many historical buildings in Eldred Township from the Chestnut Ridge Railway, as well as the Old Kunkletown Post Office, historical taverns , old mill and stone bridge. Even the farmhouse on the Mock Park property was originally built in the early 1800's, not to mention the historic ruins of a mill along the Princess Run. There are many unique and delicate ecosystems that will be protected from development. A beautiful spring, natural waterfalls, acres of woodlands, steep slopes, a flood terrain, and natural riparian corridors all are under the protection of the property deed restrictions. As a central location, and still a relatively preserved area, Eldred Township has the opportunity to further encourage preservation and education of our region.

The Mock Park will continue the goals of DCNR, to be a preserved piece of open space for the community, to continue to enjoy nature at its purest, as well as provide a greenway connection to the Buckwa corridor and Appalachian Trail. With the many restrictions on the property deed, perhaps this area will be enjoyed as a nature study area for community students. It's High Quality Stream and natural environment will be preserved for generations and provide many with passive recreation, educational opportunities', and greenway connections for futures to come.

A central building block of the area, the Mock Park anchors a path to the history of the region. With the continued help of DCNR and community support, acquisition of some key historical Township buildings in Eldred Township will continue to preserve local history and its native landscape. Continuous growth in all regions may displace our fragile eco system. With Eldred Township's many delicate streams and lively German history, continuous efforts are needed to educate our residents and visitors, to our vitality in being a good neighbor. As growth is important to everyone, so is the preservation of history and our environment. With proper planning and management, both can be achieved. Eldred Township, and the Mock Park, is centrally located to become a fragile link between many larger communities to our north, south, east and west...as was once indicated by our Chestnut Ridge Railway, Model T Ford shop, grist mill, the only, white- brick Chestnut Ridge Sand Company, and an original Kunkletown Post Office and Hotel!! Many communities have relinquished their historical buildings and story but Eldred Township has many opportunities' to preserve the area's mark in history.

As the Township proceeds with this project, an announcement and celebration of receiving the DCNR grant will be published in local papers. Public meetings will be held from January to April 2012, to finalize the playground structure, within the specified budget and age group, as well as all being ADA compliant, and gather future volunteers for the day of equipment erection. Playground equipment will be ordered in April, given a 4 to 6 week turn around on delivery. The excavation of the parking lot and Tot Lot area will be completed by the Eldred Township road crew, beginning in May 2012, after April's heavy rains. Depending upon DCNR approval and engineering delays, Tot Lot equipment could be erected in July.

Erection of the Tot Lot playground equipment takes approximately two days. Project supervisor will arrange for delivery and inspection of equipment and notify volunteers. A technical supervisor will be hired from the selected playground purveyor, to ensure precision, efficiency, and safety. In July, Day

1, the technical supervisor will ensure proper area and grade of 53' x 33' Tot Lot drainage bed and drill holes for play structure. The road crew and volunteers will be organized to complete construction Day 2. The technical supervisor will organize volunteers into project groups, give instruction and help construct the Mock Park Tot Lot. Concrete footers will be poured 3 inches below matting surface to ensure stability. After curing, 12" of playground mulch will be spread to provide safety and ADA compliant material. Some grass seeding and gravel pathway will be raked in. ADA park benches and trash receptacles will also be purchased and provided, as well as The Walter W. Mock Park sign with DCNR logo.

Official Grand Opening will hopefully be in August, giving new seedlings and tree plantings some time to establish. Local news coverage will encourage visitors and get the word out. A safety checklist, maintained in the Eldred Township Municipal building, will be maintained weekly, during the busy summer months. The Mock Park will close at the end of October, with monthly safety checks. The Park will reopen in April. Development of the Mock Park is priority to its Supervisor's and community and will continue to acquire funding to complete the Mock Park Master Plan and further DCNR's goals of connecting and educating people to nature.