



# Open Space

# Introduction

## What is Open Space?

Open Space refers to many different types of undeveloped land or common areas. A variety of uses can be found in Open Space, such as agricultural uses, passive and active recreational uses, stormwater management (utility) uses, and ecological uses. Open Space can be publicly owned, such as parks, or privately owned, such as privately-owned farms. Likewise, some Open Space is designed for public access, whereas other Open Space has restricted access because it is privately owned or because restricted access helps further the intent of the Open Space (e.g., not permitting access to a wild area that is a habitat for an endangered species).

In this chapter, classifications of Open Space will be defined to create a nuanced understanding of different types of Open Space and their characteristics, opportunities, and limitations for furthering the goals of this plan.

## Why is Open Space so important?

Open Space is an all-encompassing way to preserve and support the agricultural resources, natural resources, and historical resources detailed in this plan. Open Space is important to maintain the health of the community in the following ways:



### *Public Health*

Open Space has a myriad of benefits for people's health and wellness. Open Space can provide opportunities for recreation and exercise, as well as access to nature and the outdoors which has been shown to have positive effects on mental health and cognitive development. The opportunities for social connections (i.e., community gatherings, socialization with neighbors and friends, etc.) in Open Space is also a great benefit. Additionally, Open Space contributes to good air quality and reductions in noise pollution which impact the overall health of community members.



### *Ecological Health*

Open Space helps to maintain and enhance ecological health through supporting the ecosystem services that the environmental features provide. These services include but are not limited to purification of water and air, carbon sequestration, waste decomposition, pest and disease control, pollination, and flood protection.



### *Economic Health*

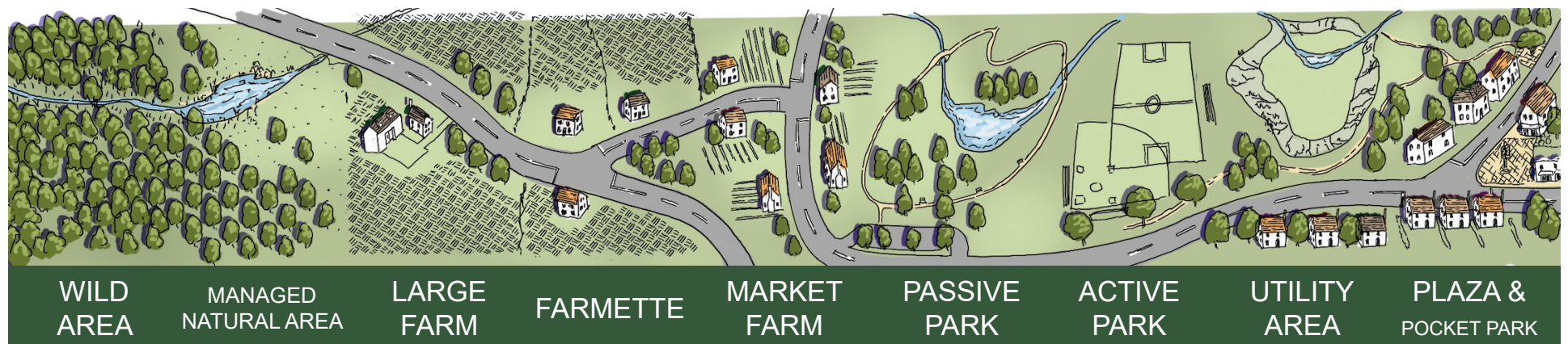
Open Space has been proven to support the economic health of municipalities directly and indirectly. Open Space can be used for agricultural production or tourism activities. The provision of Open Space can also attract businesses and families to the area. Proximity to Open Space can also have positive impacts on property values.



# Open Space Classifications

The term “open space” can mean many different things depending on who is asked to define the term. Some people may think of preserved agricultural land, other may think of parks with trails and sports fields, whereas others would define it as land left completely in its natural state. All of these definitions are correct. South Whitehall Landscapes aims to establish a collective vocabulary around different types open space in order to have more productive, focused conversations, programs, and policies about open space that will help South Whitehall Township accomplish the goals in this plan. This section provides information on each type of open space, including general sizes, land uses, ownership, maintenance, and recommended preservation methods associated with each space.

To visualize the open space classifications, an open space transect was created. In planning, an urban-to-rural transect is used to show and define a series of zones that transition from rural areas to dense urban downtowns. The open space transect below follows a similar approach in categorizing types of open space from wild areas to plazas and pocket parks often found in town or neighborhood centers. The transect moves from areas that are more rural in nature on the left of the transect starting with wild areas to open spaces that may be found closer to neighborhoods or within neighborhoods, such as active parks, stormwater management areas, and plazas and pocket parks on the right.



# Open Space Classifications

Each open space classification is accompanied by the following information:

## Description & Land Use

A brief description of the open space classification and the general types of land use occurring on the open space. In some cases, this description is accompanied by a photograph as an illustrative example.

## Type

The open spaces are either categorized as a conservation open space or a civic open space:

- **Conservation** open spaces are primarily intended for environmental protection and agricultural preservation. Conservation open spaces are sometimes open to the public, but most of the time access is restricted.
- **Civic** open spaces tend to be open to the public and designed to be nearby development (such as residential neighborhoods or village centers). Civic open spaces are intended to meet ecological as well as social needs.

## Size

The typical size of the open space classification:

- **Any size**
- **Less than 5 acres**
- **5 to 10 acres**
- **More than 10 acres**

## Ownership

The typical ownership of the underlying property: either **private** or **public**. In many cases, a public entity may hold certain rights to private property, without having full ownership. This is further explained in the Property Rights Overview section of this plan. If both public and private are selected, it is common to see these types of open spaces owned by government agencies or private organizations/individuals.

## Recommended Preservation Methods

Preservation methods that are best suited for the classification of open space. The preservation methods include **fee-simple acquisition**, **easement**, **deed restriction**, and **zoning** as described in the Open Space Preservation Strategy section.

## Maintenance

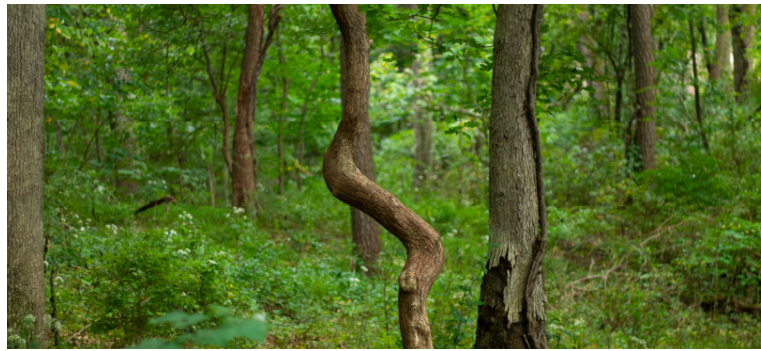
Anticipated maintenance level of open space classification. For some of these open spaces, detailed management plans will need to be created and submitted.

- **Zero to Limited:** Areas that require zero to little maintenance because they are meant to be left wild or in a natural state.
- **Limited:** These areas require seasonal or annual maintenance.
- **Regular:** Due to intensity of use, regular (daily to weekly) maintenance is needed for these areas, such as planting, mowing, trash collection, and more.
- **Intensive:** Areas that require intensive maintenance may need maintenance workers with a specialized skill set or certification (e.g., playground inspection).

# Open Space Classification: Wild Area

## Description & Land Use

Wild areas are open spaces that are typically unmaintained and left in their natural state. They often contain a natural resource. Wild areas allow ecosystems to thrive naturally without impact from humans



**Kohler Ridge Park**  
Source: Omnes Studio



## Type

Conservation	Civic
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## Size

<5 acres	5-10 acres	>10 acres
Any Size		

## Ownership

Public	Private
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

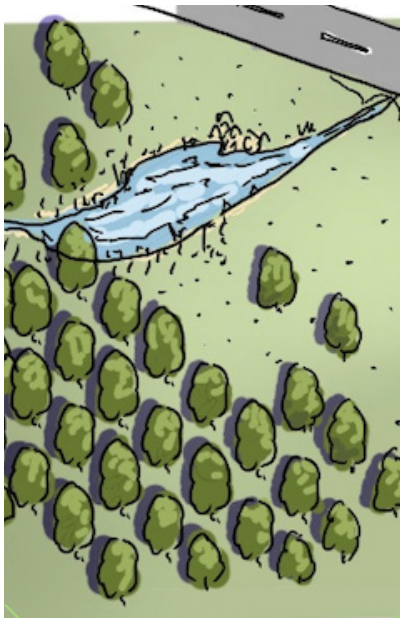
Fee-Simple
Easement
Deed Restriction
Zoning

## Maintenance

Zero to limited	Limited
Regular	Intensive



# Open Space Classification: Managed Natural Area



## Description & Land Use

Managed Natural Areas are similar to Wild Areas in that they often contain a natural resource. They are also left primarily in their natural state with some limited maintenance. Limited maintenance is focused on removing invasive species or impacts from human use and supporting the naturally occurring ecosystem.



**Ballas Meadow Preserve**

Source: *Lehigh Valley Greenways*



## Type

Conservation	Civic
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## Size

<5 acres	5-10 acres	>10 acres
Any Size		

## Ownership

Public	Private
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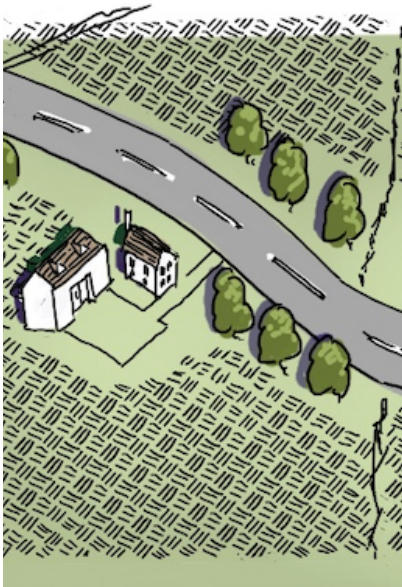
## Recommended Preservation Methods

Fee-Simple
Deed Restriction
Easement
Zoning

## Maintenance

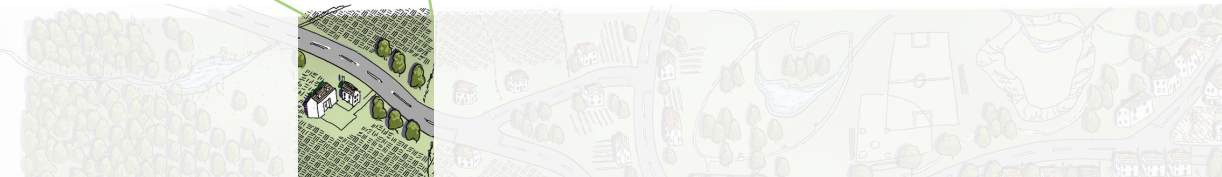
Zero to limited	Limited
Regular	Intensive

# Open Space Classification: Large Farm



## Description & Land Use

Large farms primary use is agricultural. They typically practice mono-culture, meaning that one crop species is grown in the field at a time, for the wholesale market. Due to the size and type of crops, large farms use mechanized labor to perform agricultural operations.



## Type

Conservation	Civic
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## Size

<5 acres	5-10 acres	>10 acres
Any Size		

## Ownership

Public	Private
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

Fee-Simple
Deed Restriction
Easement
Zoning

## Maintenance

Zero to limited	Limited
Regular	Intensive

# Open Space Classification: Farmette



## Description & Land Use

Farmettes are small farms. The primary use is agricultural and there is often an accessory residential use. Farmettes cultivate multiple type of crops for the wholesale market, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, or market sales. Farmettes can also include raising of low-impact livestock (e.g., horses, goats, etc.). In addition to fields for crops and livestock, portions of farmettes can also include a natural feature such as a stream, steep slope, etc.

*\* Ownership: Small farms are typically privately owned; however, there are opportunities for municipal or land trust ownership.*



## Type

Conservation	Civic
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## Size

<5 acres	5-10 acres	>10 acres
Any Size		

## Ownership

Public	Private*
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

Fee-Simple
Deed Restriction
Easement
Zoning

## Maintenance

Zero to limited	Limited
Regular	Intensive



# Open Space Classification: Market Farm



## Description & Land Use

A market farm can either have an agricultural or residential primary use with the other use being accessory. Market farms grow multiple crops or produce specialty products for market sales, retail sales, or direct to consumer sales. Market farms always have a commercial component. Due to the size and nature of production on a market farm, hand/small tool labor is used rather than mechanized labor.



## Type

Conservation	Civic
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## Size

<5 acres	5-10 acres	>10 acres
Any Size		

## Ownership

Public	Private
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

Fee-Simple
Deed Restriction
Easement
Zoning

## Maintenance

Zero to limited	Limited
Regular	Intensive

# Highlight:

## Market Farms

### Neversink Farm

*Catskill Mountains, New York*

Neversink Farm plants, cultivates, and harvests using modern tools and techniques, but without mechanized labor to produce high quality vegetables. Neversink Farm offers a farm store on their property that sells their produce along with other local, sustainable, and humane products. For more information, please visit <https://www.neversinkfarm.com/>.

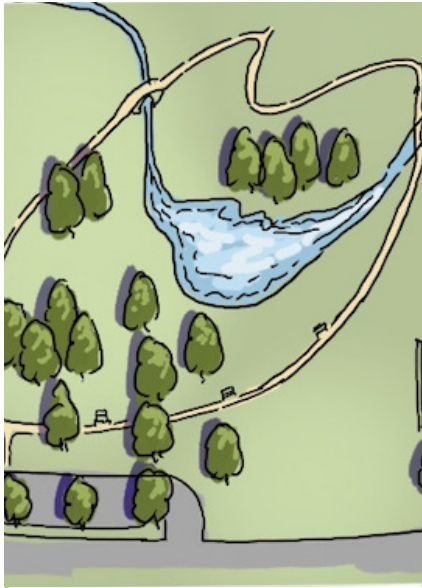


### Scholl Orchards

*Bethlehem, Pennsylvania*

Scholl Orchards started as a farm stand and evolved into a market farm offering a variety of fruit and vegetables from their farm store on the orchard's property. For more information, please visit <https://www.schollorchards.com/>

# Open Space Classification: Passive Park



## Description & Land Use

Passive parks are open spaces for passive recreation (e.g., walking, wildlife viewing, picnicking, etc.). Passive parks contain a limited amount of maintained areas for passive enjoyment while conserving the remainder of the property.



**Spring Valley Estates Park**  
*Source: South Whitehall Township*



## Type

Conservation	<b>Civic</b>
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## Size

<5 acres	5-10 acres	>10 acres
<b>Any Size</b>		

## Ownership

<b>Public</b>	Private
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

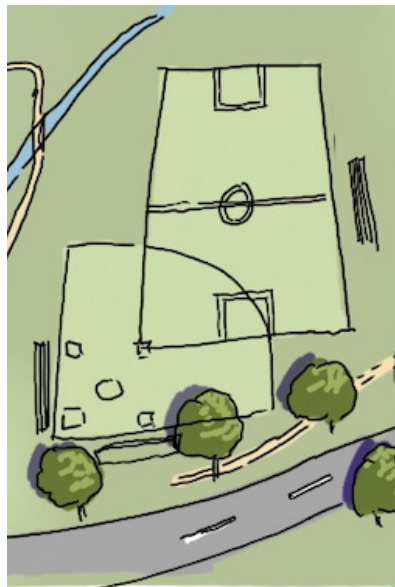
<b>Fee-Simple</b>
Deed Restriction
Easement
Zoning

## Maintenance

Zero to limited	Limited
<b>Regular</b>	Intensive



# Open Space Classification: Active Park



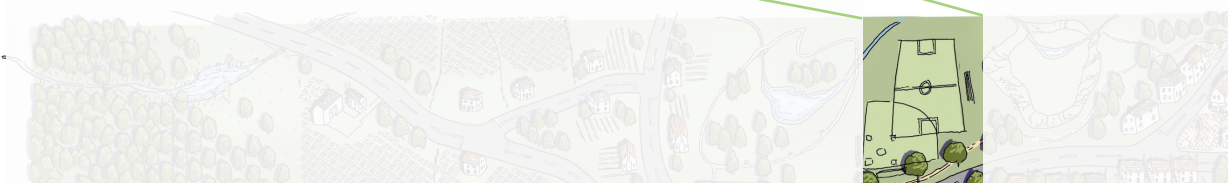
## Description & Land Use

An active park is an open space maintained for active recreation activities. It can contain structures (e.g., playground equipment or pavilions) and well maintained sports fields or courts.



**Covered Bridge Park**

Source: Michael Baker International



## Type

Conservation	<b>Civic</b>
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## Size

<5 acres	5-10 acres	>10 acres
<b>Any Size</b>		

## Ownership

<b>Public</b>	Private
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

<b>Fee-Simple</b>
Deed Restriction
Easement
Zoning

## Maintenance

Zero to limited	Limited
<b>Regular</b>	<b>Intensive</b>

# Open Space Classification: Utility Area



## Description & Land Use

Utility Areas are open spaces that are dedicated to managing stormwater, treating wastewater, or accessing/buffering utility infrastructure. These open spaces often have minimum space requirements depending on their function relative to the utility. Maintenance is prescribed by Best Management Practices (BMPs) or regulatory agencies. The intent of this open space classification is to promote the use of green infrastructure for utility system management whenever possible.



**Stormwater Management Area**

Source: Michael Baker International



## Type

Conservation	<b>Civic</b>
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## Size

<b>&lt;5 acres</b>	<b>5-10 acres</b>	>10 acres
Any Size		

## Ownership

<b>Public</b>	Private
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

Fee-Simple
<b>Deed Restriction</b>
Easement
<b>Zoning</b>

## Maintenance

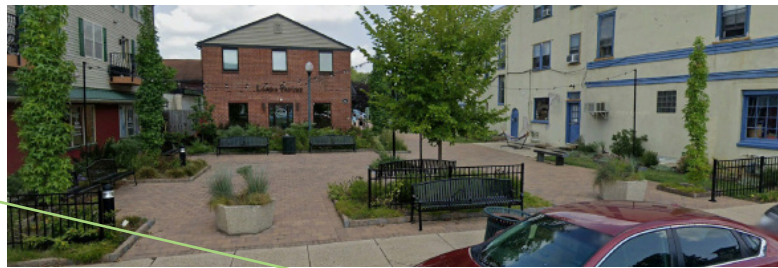
Zero to limited	<b>Limited</b>
Regular	Intensive

# Open Space Classification: Plaza & Pocket Park



## Description & Land Use

Plazas and pocket parks are typically found in village or town centers. They are public spaces tucked between existing residential or commercial uses, or located at key intersections or points of interest within the village or town. Plazas and pocket parks have features that encourage people to gather, such as benches, tables, public art, and plantings.



**Pocket Park**

*Source: Michael Baker International*



## Type

Conservation	<b>Civic</b>
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## Size

<b>&lt;5 acres</b>	5-10 acres	>10 acres
Any Size		

## Ownership

<b>Public</b>	Private
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## Recommended Preservation Methods

<b>Fee-Simple</b>
<b>Deed Restriction</b>
Easement
<b>Zoning</b>

## Maintenance

Zero to limited	Limited
<b>Regular</b>	Intensive