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# W. Pikeland 's award is very well-deserved

The Natural Lands Trust recently announced that it had given its second Growing Greener Award in recognition of municipal efforts in Chester County to preserve open space for the benefit of local residents to West Pikeland .

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That township, one of the most picturesque in the northern tier of our county, is certainly deserving of the honor.

In fact the announcement of the honor came just days after the Board of Supervisors there unanimously accepted a master plan proposed for the township’s planned community park at the former White Farm along Conestoga Road. The effort shows the foresight township leaders employed in first, not allowing a valuable piece of open land in a heavily traveled corridor to fall prey to development but also in looking at the needs of its residents for active and passive outdoor recreation opportunities.

The township purchased the 67-acre tract in 2013 for \$5.2 million. According to Township Manager Vince Visoskas, The township is reserving five acres for municipal uses, possibly a road maintenance shed. The remaining 62 acres will be parkland.

The open space of the park will include active and passive recreational areas, conservation habitat and the adaptation of the remaining historical structures that exist on the property, according to the township resolution that was adopted during the supervisors’ March 2 meeting.

At that time, Joan Cohen, park committee member, discussed the design of the proposed park. She said the flat fields could be used for walking areas. Township officials are considering the park development in phases to build infrastructure. She said they could expand on what exists on the farmland that is developed. They are planning to have a bathroom facility on the property.

The plans also include pavilions, trails, athletic fields and a basketball court, and an area called a “hub” that would be accessible with pedestrian connections to the proposed facilities.

They proposed paved trails and also grassy paths for a natural setting around the existing wetlands, near Conestoga Road, along the corridor of the old Pickering Valley Railroad.

Michael Groman, a park committee member, said residents are getting the “best of both worlds” with two-thirds of the land to remain for passive uses and one-third to be used for active uses.

"We are very happy and pleased that this acquisition and preservation happened," said Groman, who is the president of the township Land Trust. "It's the largest parcel that's been able to be protected using open space funds from the township."

Ted Gacomis, a park committee member, explained that the land was poised for development of 125 homes. When settlement could not be reached, Gacomis noted, the homeowners asked the township about purchasing the open space.

The 12 park committee members said they would like a park name that represents West Pikeland Township and respects the history of the land.

Additionally, the supervisors consented to apply for grants to help with the park costs. One is a \$500,000 grant for park development funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation Resources. Another is a \$250,000 grant in park development funding from Chester County.

The folks in West Pikeland are lucky to have such a dedicated force in bringing about open space preservation.

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