

HERMITAGE

PENNSYLVANIA

Our environmental stewardship and recreational opportunities





Photos on front cover, clockwise from top left: Buhl Park Casino lighted for the holidays; children taking part in the annual Summer Recreation Program; a kickball game at the Hermitage Athletic Complex; and volunteers from Grace Chapel Church, Hermitage, planting trees at Whispering Pines Community Park.

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Hermitage: Focus

In the 1990s, residents of the City of Hermitage were blessed with a variety of recreational opportunities, but most of them were privately owned. The City was home to Buhl Park, 275 acres gifted to the greater community that offered a place to walk, bike, play on a playground and golf, and hosted a plethora of community activities. Other privately owned venues included the YMCA, which offered fitness activities for all ages; the Hermitage Little League complex, home of youth baseball; and New Virginia Park, a neighborhood park.

But, City officials came to believe that they needed to take a more active role in the health and recreational inclinations of residents. The City government owned only one recreational facility, the Baker Avenue Park, and it was not in very good condition.

More needed to be done. City residents deserved a wider range of opportunities, and they

should not all be accessible only by vehicle.

At the same time, City officials felt a related calling: to be good stewards of the environment.

City officials decided that they needed to be leaders in these two areas, which not only promotes the health and retention of current residents, but helps to attract new businesses and residents. The City had outstanding public safety and public works services and schools, but there is more to quality of life than a well-trained safety service and a good school.

In about 1994, the planning to make these dreams a reality began with the first of a series of comprehensive recreation and open space plans that took in the thoughts of City residents and other interested parties, and set a blueprint for how to get it done. The City initiated master plans for trail and pedestrian facilities, and made

it a policy that developers build sidewalks, with the City taking on the responsibility of filling in the gaps.

The City built three parks: Rodney White Olympic Park, Whispering Pines Community Park and the Hermitage Athletic Complex, which offered active and passive activities that appealed to hardcore athletes and dog walkers alike. The City is developing Stull Farm, an environmental park that will merge recreation and environmental consciousness in ways not normally associated with a City government.

Trails are a key component of the parks, but the City felt it needed to extend its trail efforts beyond them. LindenPointe Innovative Business Campus was built for new business, particularly those relying on technological advances, but the park's trail system is one of the busiest in the City. Trails throughout the City tie together neighborhoods,



on the good life

and places people want to go, such as Buhl Park.

The City also created a Recreation Department to provide activities for residents. The effort grew to create the Hermitage Holiday Light Parade, which attracts thousands of visitors who want to see Christmas-themed floats and marching bands; the Hermitage Arts Festival, a summer staple of visual art, music, kids activities and fair food; and the Hermitage Night Market, which brings farm-fresh food and homemade crafts within reach.

The City continues to support the organizations that already serve City residents, and promotes their activities, including underwriting the cost of pool passes to Buhl Park, and library cards at the Community Library of the Shenango Valley, along with contributing to expansion and upgrade projects at Buhl Park and the Hermitage Little League Complex.

On the environmental front, the City turned an obligation to upgrade its waste water treatment plant into the award-winning Food Waste to Energy and Waste Water Reclamation Facility, which takes in spoiled, recalled and expired food from food producers to create a biogas that is burned to produce electricity and produces a Class A Biosolid that can be used in land application for agriculture and brownfield reclamation. The facility has saved City rate payers significant dollars by reducing plant-operating costs, and manufacturers who would otherwise have to send their waste materials to a landfill.

Additionally, the City has restored two of its streams, instituted a myriad of recycling opportunities and created or supported programs that allow residents and neighbors to do their part for the environment through composting classes presented by the Pennsylvania Resources Council and support

of Buhl Park's outdoor education activities.

The City wants to be a place where families and individuals want to live. To achieve that goal, recreation and the arts are considered along with public safety and public works. The City offers facilities, events and programs, and partners with other organizations that are working for the benefit of City residents.

The City's efforts to preserve and enhance the environment, both by initiating projects and giving residents a way to contribute to the cause, shows the belief that not doing so would be a disservice to those who will be Hermitage residents in the future.

Providing recreation opportunities and environmental stewardship go hand in hand in the City's efforts to promote a healthy community with a high quality of life.



Hermitage Parks and Recreation Department

The City of Hermitage Parks and Recreation Department provides people of all ages the opportunity to participate in active and passive recreation activities, programs and events.

The Department plans and operates the Summer Recreation Program, which is provided in conjunction with the Hermitage School District; the fall baseball league; and the adult kickball league. Events such as the Hermitage Holiday Light Festival, supported by a committee of community volunteers; the Hermitage Arts Festival; and the Hermitage Growers and Artisans Market are coordinated by the Department.

The Department sponsors bus trips and recycling programs, and has partnered with Buhl Park to provide reduced cost outdoor pool passes for residents. The City works closely with other providers of recreational opportunities – the YMCA, Buhl Park and the Buhl Community Recreation Center. The Hermitage Athletic Complex is home to youth football and soccer and girls softball. Hermitage also supports the Hermitage Little League baseball program.

The Department is headed by a full-time director and operates with guidance from the Hermitage Parks and Recreation Board, an advisory body made up of volunteer Hermitage residents, who are appointed by the Hermitage Board of Commissioners.

The City's newsletter and social media efforts provide residents and interested people information on activities, programs and events. The City regularly updates the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan, and works to develop plans for the expansion of recreational facilities and programs.

Hermitage welcomes input from residents with comments and suggestions regarding facilities, programs and events to keep them relevant and to meet the desires and needs of the community.



Hermitage Summer Recreation Program

The City of Hermitage and the Hermitage School District sponsor a summer recreation program that is free to all City residents. This program uses school district facilities for indoor and outdoor activities, including basketball, tennis, volleyball, wrestling and cross-country running. A day camp for children entering grades two through seven offers arts and crafts, swimming and other fun activities.



Hermitage Night Market

The City of Hermitage Night Market provides an opportunity for farmers, artisans and producers in the region to sell what they produce, forging relationships between the parties, and limiting the distance food and goods travel before reaching the consumer.





Hermitage Holiday Light Parade

The annual event typically attracts 10,000 to 12,000 spectators a year with its collection of brightly lit floats, decorated fire trucks, school marching bands and local dance and twirling groups, all marching to a holiday theme.

It takes a cast of hundreds to make the November event possible. Local businesses, non-profit entities, churches, fire departments, schools and other groups rally their employees and members to design and create parade floats. Parade trailers are donated by local trucking companies for those interested in building a float. Entrants vie for prizes awarded by a panel of volunteer judges, and more volunteers help with the setting and cleaning up.

First started in 1998, the parade travels along on East State Street toward North Hermitage Road. The parade opens with a one-mile race along the course route that raises money for the Hickory High School Cross Country Team. The parade also features a grand marshal, so chosen for his or her community service efforts, and a large fireworks production to culminate the night.







A Celebration of the Visual and Performing Arts



Hermitage Arts Festival

Every summer, people from all over visit the two-day festival, held in Rodney White Olympic Park, to browse the artist's marketplace, listen to live music, enjoy many food options and participate in children's activities.

The free event showcases the work of local painters, sculptors, jewelry artists, photographers and other artisans. Activities such as Chalk-the-Walk and the pet costume contest offer something for all ages. Local bands play a variety of musical styles. A 5K run and a fireworks display also make the event special.



Rodney White Olympic Park

Named after the Olympic Gold-Medal-winning archer, Rodney White Olympic Park combines property owned by the City, Hermitage School District and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania into a 22-acre parcel.

Situated along North Hermitage Road, the park is used year-round as it offers a quaint, forested walking trail, a playground, a multi-purpose field, restrooms and tennis courts. The park is used by children who want to play on the playground, adults and runners who take to the trail, and sports teams that practice on the open field. It also is the site of the Hermitage Arts Festival.



Baker Avenue Park

Baker Avenue Park is the oldest and smallest of Hermitage's five, City-owned parks. Located at the intersection of Baker Avenue and Griswold Street, the park features a baseball field and meadows.

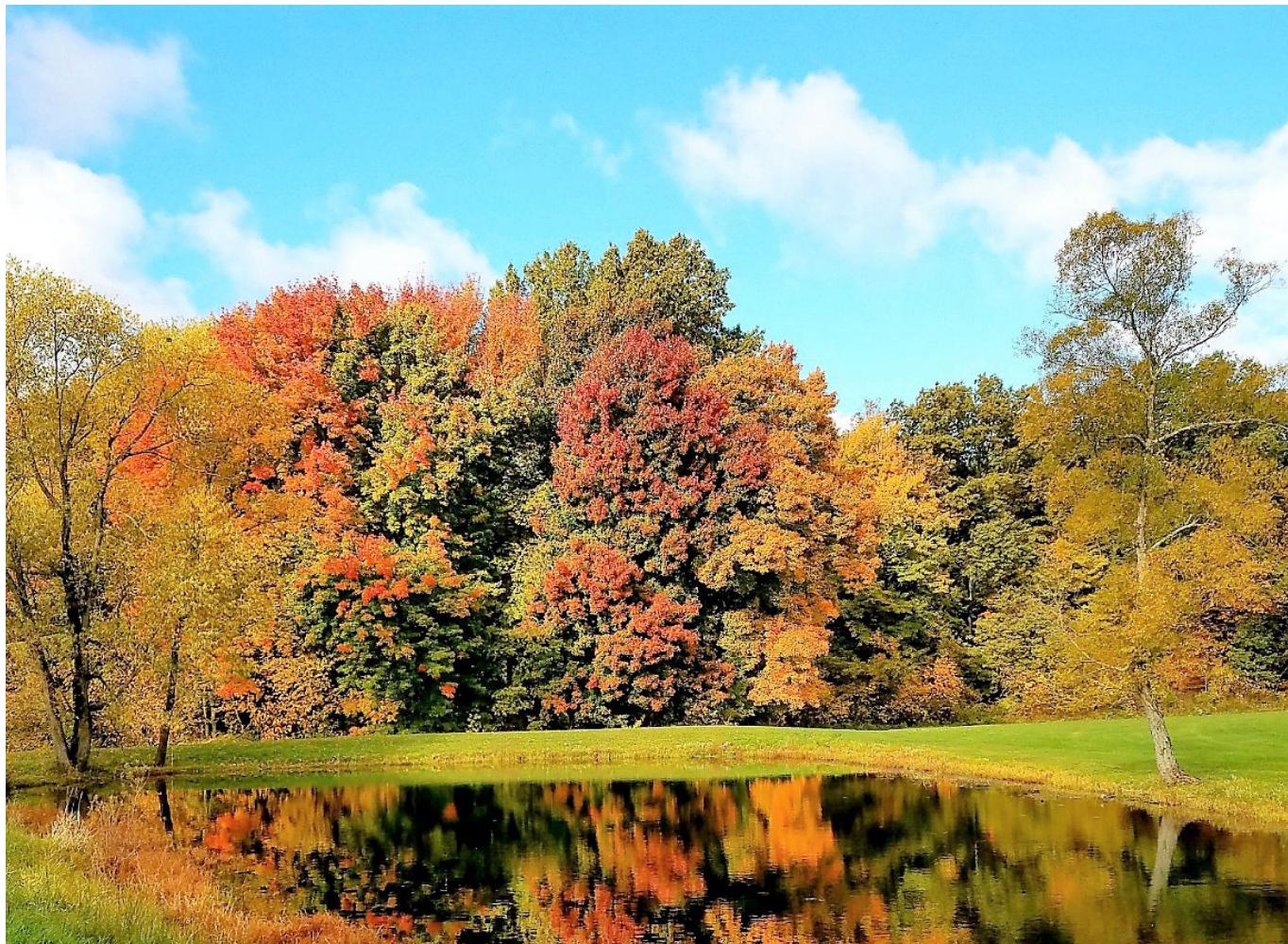
Stull Farm Park

Former City Commissioner Sylvia A. Stull bequeathed her family homestead on Sample Road to the City, and the natural amenities already there will be highlighted as the City develops Stull Farm Park. The 40-acre site, a former farm, reminds City dwellers of the City's rural roots. The property boasts large, sweeping meadows, wetlands and dense, forested areas. Plans for the park include walking and nature trails, and an activities building.



Understanding our new logo:

The abstract leaf shape within the logo represents recreation (blue=water) and nature. Technically, its addition to the design puts the joyous, human-like figure into focus.



Whispering Pines Community Park

A passive park, Whispering Pines offers 22 acres of paved and unpaved walking trails, a small pond for fishing, and large meadows that are perfect for a game of pick-up football and family picnics. Located on East State Street, Whispering Pines functions as a community park and a neighborhood park, as the walking trail connects to North Darby Road. The Hermitage Historical Society's Stewart House is on Whispering Pines property.



Volunteers from Grace Chapel Church, Hermitage, help spruce up Whispering Pines' walking trail.



Hermitage Historical Society

Hermitage Historical Society was created to preserve the history of the city, and is housed in the Stewart House, the Victorian mansion on the grounds of Whispering Pines Community Park, 5465 E. State St. The society is dedicated to preserving the house.

The society meets monthly – its meetings are open to the public – and often has a speaker or discussion topic dealing with Hermitage history, regional history or the preservation of history. Topics of discussion have included the history of the Hermitage Post Office, the cleaning of old gravestones and the Great Allegheny Bike Trail.

The Stewart House is decorated for Christmas, and an annual display of decorated Christmas trees attracts many for free tours.

The society also hosts periodic community flea markets and “treasure” sales.



Hermitage Athletic Complex

The 75-acre Hermitage Athletic Complex on South Darby Road is unparalleled in the region.

Situated next to the Hermitage Little League Complex, the HAC, which is easily accessible from Route 62, is designed so visitors can move from one to the other without seeing an obvious border.

The HAC was opened in 2011 and fulfills two recommendations made in the Comprehensive Recreation Plan that was in place at the time: It makes additional athletic fields available, a request of individuals and the various independent sports leagues that operate in the City, and “strengthen(s) relationships with existing recreation partners and build(s) new partnerships.”

The partners that came together to create the HAC include the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which has provided construction grants; Hermitage Little League; the Hermitage Parks and Recreation Board; and local businesses and organizations.

The HAC and Little League Complex provide two youth softball fields – one with lights – four youth baseball fields, two open play fields, batting cages, a playground, a concession stand, restrooms and a trail.



Hermitage Little League

Hermitage Little League has its own facility on Virginia Road, but closely partners with the City in ways that enhance both entities.

The league's complex of four baseball fields borders the Hermitage Athletic Complex on South Darby Road. The City mows the Little League facility and recently obtained a state grant to renovate one of the league's fields. The City and the league have used each other's fields for tournaments, and the City hosts a Fall Baseball League on the Little League fields.



Hermitage Fall Baseball Program

This league is open to teams from all over the Pennsylvania and Ohio areas. Players ages 5 to 15 participate in appropriate divisions, and the seven-week league plays games on Sundays, beginning the Sunday after Labor Day.



Understanding our new logo:

The circular composition is very centered, stationary, and in focus. Its appearance is youthful, playful, energetic, and dynamic.



Hermitage Girls Softball

The Hermitage Girls Softball Association plays and practices at the Hermitage Athletic Complex on South Darby Road. It offers fast-pitch teams for girls ages 8 to at least 18.

The association operates the concession stand for home league games and hosts an annual tournament in one of the age groups.

The association and the City and many sponsors in 2017 built a state-of-the-art batting cage that features two batting tunnels, athletic turf and lights.

Hermitage Little Hornets Youth Football Program

Hermitage Little Hornets Youth Football Program offers football and cheerleading to Hermitage youths ages 7-12.

The program is run independently of the Hermitage Parks and Recreation Department, but primarily uses Hermitage fields. All practices and a few games and scrimmages take place at the Hermitage Athletic Complex and Rodney White Olympic Park.

The Hickory High School football stadium is the main location for league games.



Buhl Community Recreation Center

When Frank Buhl created what is now known as the Buhl Community Recreation Center in 1903, he wanted Shenango Valley men to have a place where they could go to keep from “falling into devious ways.”

While such language would not be used today, the sentiment still holds true: The Sharon center has plenty of positive things for people to do.

Now open to all genders and ages, the center features group fitness and training activities, youth sports, art and science classes, swimming, gymnastics, a weight room, cheerleading and daycare, and hosts community activities such as Penn State Shenango basketball, the Buhl Model Train Society's annual train show and birthday parties.

The club offers reasonably priced membership, and financial aid is available.

In a recent annual report, Executive Director Jason Kmick said club leaders will continue to improve and update the facility – with community input on the plans – and “establish the Buhl Club as a community leader for health, wellness, recreation, socialization, and youth development.”

Hermitage Kickball League

The City-run Hermitage Kickball League – a co-ed league for adults – started play in 2016.

Kickball is a popular, low-key, late-summer activity with teams formed by local businesses, organizations and social groups. Games are played on the softball fields at the Hermitage Athletic Complex on South Darby Road, and an end-of-the-year tournament mixes a cookout with the crowning of a champion.

Shenango Valley YMCA

For more than 65 years, the Shenango Valley YMCA in Hermitage has promoted healthy living, meaningful change and universal opportunity for individuals and families.

The Y has three areas of focus: youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, because all three areas are building blocks to a strong community.

Youth development activities include the F.I.T. Program that mixes athletic activities and games with “wacky” and “radical” themes, workout instruction for teens, summer day camps, and soccer, baseball, basketball, swimming and flag football leagues.

Healthy living programs include Silver Sneaker fitness activities, and programs aimed toward weight loss, proper nutrition, diabetes prevention, post-rehabilitative activity, and cancer support.

The Y promotes social responsibility by accepting donations that support the Y's mission, and presenting volunteer opportunities for people to work with Y clients or help with administrative and organization-building tasks.

The Y staff are available for classes and seminars at off-site locations, and provide reasonably priced memberships and financial aid options to its members.



Shenango Valley Soccer Club

Shenango Valley Soccer Club offers soccer for area residents from youth to adult.

The club is run independently of the Hermitage Parks and Recreation Department, but uses City-owned fields – the Hermitage Athletic Complex on South Darby Road, Rodney White Olympic Park on North Hermitage Road, and a field on Virginia Road – for games and practices.



Complete corridors

Connecting the people of Hermitage to the place where they live is one of the principles in the city's vision for the future. One way this is bearing out is in the city's approach to developing streets, trails and sidewalks.

The Hermitage 2030 Comprehensive Plan calls for creating "complete corridors" that improve the city's appearance, increase walkability and accommodate more than one means of travel.

These complete corridors should "do more than just move vehicles from one place to another," the plan states.

Historically, the city was developed as a suburban, car-dependent community. Significant efforts have been undertaken over the past couple of decades to create and improve trails and pedestrian walkways, so people have options beside driving from place to place. Continuing these efforts is a high priority for the city.

The Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan and the Hermitage Comprehensive Plan identified specific goals and recommended continued investments to meet community needs. The common vision repeated in both plans is to build a pedestrian system connecting people to residential neighborhoods, parks, recreation facilities and local destinations, and to create a healthier, safer, walkable environment. Pedestrian facilities are essential to all modes of transportation being successful, including biking and public transportation.



"The vision for the 2017 Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan is to connect the city's residential areas, commercial districts and recreation/cultural destinations through safe, walkable and multi-modal transportation facilities."

~from The 2017 Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan



Trail Systems:

LindenPointe Trail

Two miles of asphalt trails and sidewalks meander along a level grade because of the property's former use as an airport. This trail provides a rural escape with excellent bird watching, but is not far from the City's commercial business district. It is accessible from South Hermitage Road and Christy Road.

Rodney White Olympic Park Trail

A 1-mile long, asphalt trail, it connects the City Building, Hickory High School, the school's athletic stadium, nearby neighborhoods, and the sidewalk along North Hermitage Road. It is a popular path for teens walking to and from Hickory High School.

Whispering Pines Park Trail

This 0.4-mile long, paved trail loops around an open field and past a pond that is home to fish and turtles. Trail spurs connect to North Darby Road, the Hermitage Historical Society's Stewart House, a sidewalk along East State Street, and an unimproved trail that takes visitors through a mature forest.

Timber Lane/Silver Ridge Court Connector Trail

The City's shortest trail at only 500 feet, it connects two neighborhoods and allows street-to-street visitation while eliminating the worry of walking on a busy main road.

Understanding our new logo:

The green abstract shape within the logo represents a geographic center, recreation (green=land), and the shape of a joyous, human-like figure



“... creating a walkable City Center that is home to public open space, a mixture of uses and entertainment...” “... improving health and wellness through recreation and active transportation...” “... creating complete corridors that do more than just move vehicles from one place to another; it’s about improving the appearance, increasing connectivity and multimodal options.”

~ Hermitage 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Trout Island Trail

The Trout Island Trail stretches 2.6 miles along the corridor of the former Erie and Pittsburgh Railroad, offering views of the Shenango River as you walk through a mature forest; close-up views of the Shenango Dam, beaver ponds and wetlands; and glimpses of a variety of wildlife, including bald eagles.

The trailhead is located on Mercer Avenue in the Borough of Sharpsville, but a second access and parking area is on Trout Island Road in Hermitage.

A group of volunteers, who later created the nonprofit corporation the Mercer County Trials Association, started the trail-planning process in 2001, and secured the cooperation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which owns the land.

The association secured state grants to build the trail, benches and signs, with construction in 2010 and 2013.

The paved trail is open to walkers, dog walkers, bicyclists, skateboarders and runners. The scenery, the solitude and the easy access locations can't be beat.



Shenango Dam

The main goal of building the Shenango Dam and creating the Shenango River Lake was to stop the flooding of Sharon and other downstream communities.

But the lake and the surrounding land – totaling 11,000 acres – present a myriad of recreational opportunities that attract people from all over western Pennsylvania and neighboring states.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-controlled property, part of which is in Hermitage, includes the Mahaney Recreation Area, which features a disc golf course, picnic areas with pavilions, boat launches and open space.

There are 330 campsites, some with electricity, for outdoor enthusiasts, and the lake waters are stocked with crappie, bass and walleye. The lake supports kayaks, canoes, paddle boards and motored boats.

Adjacent land is owned by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and is used for wildlife management and waterfowl propagation.

Built in 1965, the dam has assisted in preventing more than \$713 million in flood damage.

Shenango River

The Shenango Valley gets its name from the Shenango River, the 82-mile long waterway that originates at Pymatuning Reservoir and winds through Crawford, Mercer, Trumbull and Lawrence counties before emptying into the Beaver River.

Throughout the Shenango Valley's history, the river has been the lifeblood of the community. It provides the water that many residents drink, supports local wildlife and offers many recreational opportunities, from fishing from the bridges in Sharon to boating on the Shenango River Lake.

However, the valley has not always been kind to the river as the valley's industrial heritage has polluted the waters and rendered the fish unsafe to eat.

Shenango River Watchers has slowly been working to reclaim a positive connection between the river and the local community. The volunteer group has removed garbage and debris from the river, monitored water quality, and offered fun events to help promote the importance and beauty of a clean stream, including kayaking and paddling, and environmental education classes for local students.



The promotion of a healthy Shenango River is important not only locally, but on a much larger scale as the Shenango River's waters eventually drain into the Ohio River, travel down the Mississippi River, and spill into the Gulf of Mexico. By keeping our waterways clean, we can have a much more enjoyable local environment and help improve water quality downstream.





Hermitage Stream Restoration Projects

The City of Hermitage recognizes the importance of local waterways and the man-made storm water collection systems that help channel rain water into streams and creeks, and has undertaken several projects to address flooding problems and improve the health and efficiency of natural waterways.

Between 2007 and 2017, the City conducted stream restoration projects on Indian Run (which flows behind the Hermitage elementary and middle school property, under North Hermitage Road and East State Street and into the neighborhoods around Easton Road, Sunset Boulevard and Butterfly Lane) and Baker Run (which flows on the western side of the City and under East State Street) to bring the waterways back to a more natural state.

The channels were widened, sloped and given a more suitable path; water-loving vegetation was planted to hold soil in place and reduce erosion; and natural obstacles were placed in the streams. These improvements produced streams that were better able to hold a sudden influx of water, slowed the speed of the current, and made the waterways more conducive to fish, frogs and other wildlife.

To see these concepts in action, view Indian Run from the pedestrian bridge between Walgreens and Kay Jewelry along North Hermitage Road.



In the Baker Run project, the City also improved roadways and drainage basins and added storm water retention basins on Theota Drive and Todd Avenue, replaced the culvert under East State Street, and stabilized the stream bank at Johnathan Place.

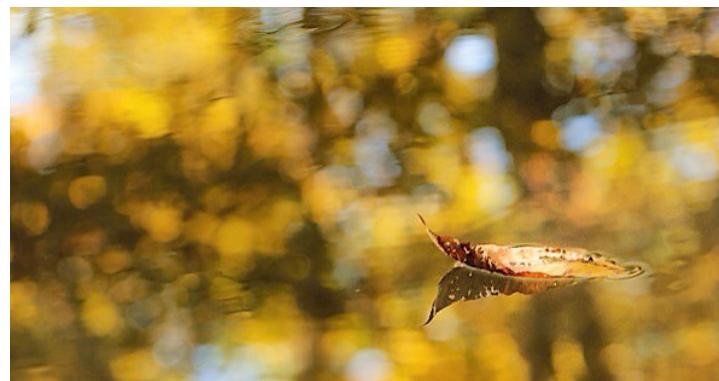
Hermitage Municipal Authority is planning a restoration project for Bobby Run to combat erosion of its banks.

In addition to addressing natural waterways, the City is obligated to monitor its man-made storm water drainage infrastructure, and educate its citizens on the importance of maintaining clean pathways for rain water.

Something commonly called MS4, which stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems, is part of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program enforced by the state Department of Environmental Protection. Under this program, the City must collect storm water from urbanized, built-up areas and discharge it into local streams – without treatment – to minimize flooding, yet do it in a way that improves the health of local waterways.

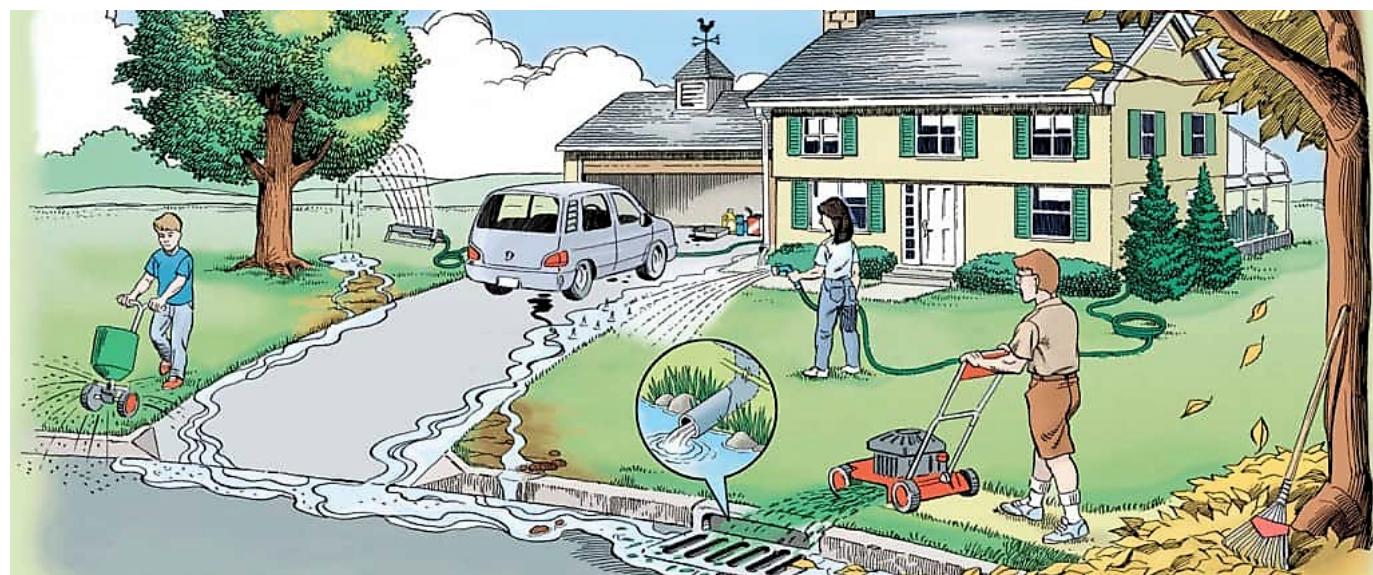
Storm water intakes, pipes and discharge points are mapped and monitored, but public education is a key component. The City informs residents and property owners of the hazards of dumping oils, antifreeze, certain cleaning agents and other hazardous materials on the ground and in storm drains, where the materials can be picked up by storm water, tainting the waterways where they end up.

The City works hard to manage what happens to the rain once it hits the ground in a way that maintains neighborhoods and property, and healthy waterways.



Understanding our new logo:

The Slab-Serif Typeface chosen for the lettering suggests stability, safety, and growth. The varied sizes show the City title literally growing larger than the state title.



Food Waste to Energy and Wastewater Reclamation Facility

The greater vision of what the people of Hermitage wanted their community to be was foremost on the minds of City leaders when the state handed down a mandate in 2008 to upgrade the City's waste water treatment plant.

That vision of a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle guided City commissioners and members of the Hermitage Municipal Authority as they made the choice to move beyond the bottom-line basics of simply meeting state requirements.

Instead, the City's leaders leveraged an upfront investment to lower City costs and user fees over time, eliminate certain negative environmental impacts, potentially spur economic development beyond the borders of the City of Hermitage and make the City a player in solving the national problem of reliance on fossil fuels.

The design of the resulting Food Waste to Energy and Wastewater Reclamation Facility, which opened in 2014, incorporated equipment that ramped up an existing technology – anaerobic digestion – so that the City could accept food waste products from local and regional food

producers and distributors. When these food products were added to the sludge that is the natural product of the waste water treatment process, anaerobic digestion converts them into a biogas that is burned to create electricity, which is sold to the electrical grid system. The

City has significantly cut its electrical bill through the sale of electricity.

The Food Waste to Energy Program handles a variety of food wastes that include spoiled and recalled items, products with expired shelf life, trimming waste and potentially contaminated products. Some examples are ice cream and other dairy products, fruit and vegetables, frozen meats, cafeteria and restaurant wastes, bakery products, soft drinks, beer and wine, dog food and honey.

Food producers and distributors interested in "green" solutions to food waste disposal frequently contact the City to learn about the Food Waste to Energy Program process. Many food industry clients – some of whom are out of state – realize substantial cost savings by using the City's program instead of sending waste to a landfill.

The City is reaping the benefits of gas generation in other ways as it is offsetting some of the electrical costs at the eCenter@LindenPointe, a business incubator, and the Hermitage Workforce and Training Center, also on the LindenPointe campus. The electric costs at more City-owned buildings could be offset as the plant generates more gas.

The process generates what is known as a "Class A biosolid" that has eliminated the City's need to send treated sludge to a landfill, which is a



significant cost saver as well as an environmentally friendly result. This biosolid is suitable for land application for use in land reclamation, brownfield remediation and agriculture.

In keeping with the concept of environmental friendliness, any materials that are used in packaging of the waste food are appropriately recycled and sold.

The Food Waste to Energy Facility on Broadway Avenue in the City's industrial section also added an ultraviolet disinfection system that cleans waste water before it is released into the Shenango River. This addition eliminated the use of chlorine as a disinfectant, and the handling of a hazardous chemical.

The Food Waste to Energy and Wastewater Reclamation Program clearly demonstrates that being responsible stewards of the environment can have multiple benefits. It protects and conserves the environment, reduces disposal costs for food waste producers and the City, and diverts sludge from landfills to useful land applications. The City generates both revenues and operational savings to maintain a stable rate structure.

The increased initial cost of the process will pay for itself over time from the savings generated by the near elimination of electricity and landfill costs.



The most notable architectural features of the Hermitage Food Waste to Energy Facility on Broadway Avenue have been the giant domes that top the digesters, where sludge is processed.

A new feature, though, rivals the look of the domes: It appears be a giant balloon, but really is a biogas storage tank. The tank can hold up to 100,000 cubic feet of the gas generated when sludge and food waste are heated and decompose. The gas is burned to make electricity.

Prior to the tank going online, the authority had to burn off any gas that was produced when the electricity generator was down for maintenance, which often takes about a



day. Burning the gas prevents methane from entering the atmosphere.

While the flare will never go away – state rules require it as a safety measure – the authority is burning off much less gas than it had been doing.

The gas stored in the tank also can be used to keep up the proper gas pressure needed to produce electricity if, for some reason, there is not enough gas coming from the digesters.

The continual supply of biogas means the plant is able to generate more electricity than it had been producing, and the storage capacity allows the authority to process more food waste.



A roundabout way to save the environment

Much is made of the safety factors involved in roundabouts, which studies have shown can reduce severe injury crashes by 80 percent, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

What is sometimes overlooked, roundabouts can lessen the environmental impact of driving.

"Stop-and-go traffic and associated acceleration/deceleration patterns have been linked to increased emissions," the FHA said. "Congestion is deemed to be a significant source of vehicle emissions."

Roundabouts can reduce emissions because "the average vehicle delay can be significantly lower during off-peak periods for roundabouts compared to signalized intersections," the FHA said. "Under peak traffic conditions, roundabouts can often match or even outperform



traffic signals operationally."

The City's roundabout, located at the intersection of East State Street and the Shenango Valley Freeway, eliminates the need for traffic signals there, reducing electricity and maintenance costs.

A lightbulb moment

The City of Hermitage took advantage of the long-term cost savings associated with LED technology when it converted about 630 street lights and the traffic lights at 25 intersections to LEDs.

The conversion process took five years. When it was finished, the City's bills for the electricity used by those lights was cut in half.

Understanding our new logo:

The circle represents a human-like head, the sun, nature, and community. The use of orange creates a vibrant focal point.



Citywide recycling

We live in what has been called a disposable society, but the City of Hermitage believes that whatever effort can be made to limit the amount of material that enters a landfill is worth doing.

The City has a curbside recycling program, which currently accepts empty metal food and aerosol containers and aluminum foil; plastic containers; corrugated and pressed cardboard; and office paper, magazines, newspapers, catalogs and paper bags. The amount of material recycled averages more than 1,000 tons a year.

Glass is no longer accepted in curbside recycling, but the City has made arrangements for periodic special glass recycling days.

Yard waste such as grass clippings, leaves, plants, flowers, sawdust and smaller tree limbs also is collected at curbside. The amount of yard waste collected and recycled has grown steadily to more than 1,000 tons.

There are many disposed-of products not included in these categories, and the City has made available the opportunity to recycle other items. Electronic waste, such as televisions, computer equipment and cellphones, can be brought to the City garage twice a month and recycled for a nominal fee. Tires and household appliances that do not include freon can be brought to the City garage during weekday business hours for recycling for free.

The City periodically hosts hard-to-recycle events, and promotes those held regionally by the Lawrence-Mercer Recycling/Solid Waste Department, which allow residents to dispose of holiday lights, thermostats, fluorescent tubes and light bulbs, shoes, cellphones and electronic media, such as VHS tapes, CDs, floppy discs, video games, film and Zip drives. All items are recycled or reused.

City residents also can make arrangements with the City's contracted waste hauler, Tri-County Industries, for the pickup of hard-to-recycle items. Tires, household hazardous waste and appliances are recycled.



Composting classes

The City of Hermitage encourages home composting by offering composting classes taught by Penn State Cooperative Extension employees.

Compost is decomposing food and vegetative waste which, when applied to gardens, flower beds and fields, fertilizes soil.

At the City's classes, which generally have cost \$50, participants receive a composting bin for use at home.

The City has offered the classes since 2010.

The eCenter: A sustainable design initiative

The eCenter@LindenPointe is more than a business incubator. The building's forward-thinking design lifts the eCenter beyond a simple economic development tool to a space that fulfills Hermitage's desire to improve not only the health of the community but also that of the environment.

The incorporation of green building and sustainability concepts in its design, construction and operation made the eCenter groundbreaking for the entire Mercer County area.

The eCenter was the first LEED Silver-certified office building in Mercer County. LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a building certification program developed by the non-profit U.S. Green Building Council. The program focuses on environmentally responsible facility design, construction, and operation.

In planning the incubator as a spur to economic development, the City also assessed the long-term benefits of green building design features, and took advantage of available federal and state funding programs to make the project a reality. The eCenter became a cornerstone of local environmentally friendly initiatives to build toward a safe, healthy and sustainable City.

In early 2010, the City worked with HHSDR, Architects/Engineers, a Sharon, Pa., firm, to prepare the design, plans, specifications and bid documents and, with assistance from the Pittsburgh Green Building Alliance, incorporate energy efficiency and sustainable design features. LEED-certified buildings use less energy and water, avoid waste, save on maintenance



costs, improve indoor air quality, offer comfort to their occupants, and create less environmental burden on the community. Generally, LEED buildings enhance the health and wellness of the occupants.

Rien Construction of nearby Brookfield, Ohio, was the lead contractor, completing construction of the eCenter in late 2011.



The eCenter includes the following sustainable design components:

- Energy and atmosphere features such as reflective (cool) roofs, exterior sunshades, a geothermal heating and cooling system, high efficiency lighting fixtures with occupancy sensors and daylight harvesting.
- Material and resource features such as regionally manufactured construction material. More than 75 percent of construction debris was recycled and diverted from landfills.
- Water efficiency features such as water-saving fixtures and Pennsylvania native plantings that eliminate the need for site irrigation.
- Indoor environmental quality features such as a high efficiency HVAC system that continually circulates fresh air, digital monitoring of electric usage, fabric duct work, polished concrete floors, low VOC finish materials, and a smoke-free environment.

The visionary leadership of the City of Hermitage

officials collaborating with regional partners led to unprecedented project funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (\$4.2 million) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (\$1.25 million) to make this environmental, economic development dream a reality. The facility was opened for business in 2012 under the direction of the LindenPointe Development Corp., a 501c3 nonprofit that leases the building and operates the eCenter incubation and business development programs.





Buhl Park

Buhl Park simultaneously lives in the past, the present and the future.

The 275-acre, privately-owned park is in the City of Hermitage, but borders the City of Sharon and the Borough of Sharpsville. The park welcomes about 500,000 visitors a year.

Some of those visitors come for special events, while others enter the park every day to walk or run, walk their dog or fish.

The park caters to a variety of interests and offers amenities for young and old to enjoy.

The park is a landmark in the community, and generations of first dates, bridal showers, weddings, birthday parties, graduation parties and anniversaries have been held there.

Park leadership has taken an active role in promoting usage by undertaking such projects as updating the historic Buhl-Timblin Casino that serves as the park's focal point; dredging Lake Julia, renovating the wetlands and planting new trees through the arboretum program to improve the park's ecology; and tearing down old playgrounds and installing new ones that better suit the play activities of today's youth.



Park leaders also have embraced the park's ability to be an outdoor classroom by creating Sandy's Place, an outdoor education area, and are looking at other projects to bring people in to learn about their environment and the community.

The City of Hermitage has partnered with Buhl Park officials in recent years by contributing to the renovation of the bridge over Lake Julia and the building of handicapped-accessible restrooms, and subsidizing the cost of City resident passes to the park pool.

Buhl Park: Wetlands

In 2021, Buhl Park undertook a project to rehabilitate its wetlands area that not only improved the ecology of the wetlands, Lake Julia, and the water that flows downstream, but furthers the park's aim toward making it an outdoor educational center.

Wetlands are the start of the aquatic ecosystem and are crucial in filtering out harmful chemicals, debris and pollutants before they reach bodies of water.

The project removed invasive plants and replaced them with native plants that help retain silt and purify the water that forms Lake Julia and eventually runs into the Shenango River. Cleaner water is more conducive to the wildlife within the park.

The park also built a culvert to control the water level within the wetlands.

Observation decks and educational signs were installed to inform visitors of the function of wetlands and the kinds of plants that support that function, and how wetlands are a benefit to the local environment.

Buhl Park: Classroom

Buhl Park often is referred to as the jewel of the Shenango Valley; a haven for golfers, dog walkers, runners, kite fliers and sled riders. It is the home of movie screenings, musical concerts and special events such as Buhl Day, Get Outdoor Days and Armed Forces Day.

Yet, industrialist Frank Buhl's 275-acre gift to the Shenango Valley also is a classroom.

The park's Sandy's Place, a Nature Explore-certified outdoor learning center, is open year-round to the public and promotes environmental education for both kids and adults.

Special educational programs offered at the park include rain barrel workshops, nature walks and wildlife lectures.

The Sandy's Scouts program gives children between the ages of 4 and 9 the chance to build an igloo during the winter and to fish over the summer. At the end of each activity, each child receives a badge showing that they have completed the event.

Buhl Park also offers the six-week Summer Youth Program for kids entering kindergarten through 6th grade. Each day brings on a different activity, including creative arts, reading and writing, that focuses on environmental themes and builds skills such as teamwork.





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The City of Hermitage's commitment to environmental stewardship and offering residents a myriad of recreational opportunities will continue into the future. The Hermitage 2030 comprehensive plan states core values that include promoting the health of residents through high quality recreation, and constructing complete corridors that "do more than just move vehicles from one place to another," such as making accommodations for walking and other forms of non-vehicular transport. These values share priority with safety concerns, neighborhood preservation and economic prosperity.