

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROPOSED RUTHLAND AVENUE BICYCLE PUMP TRACK

Recently, information has been disseminated regarding a proposed bicycle pump track located in the wooded area behind Ruthland Avenue. This project came to fruition after an extensive planning process, the documentation of which is available on the Malvern Borough website in the link below.

[Randolph Woods Master Plan](#)

In order to address a proliferation of inaccurate and misleading information being spread regarding this project, please see the information below.

Motivation

- For years, members of the community have attended meetings asking for safe places for children to ride trail bikes. Individuals were riding in our protected woodlands, causing damage to the natural setting. This activity is not permitted due to easement/deed restrictions, but finding an alternative has been a challenge, since there is little unused land of appropriate topography in the Borough. We began to explore other available Borough-owned land sites in 2019 and found that none were well-suited for this activity. Fortunately, the Randolph Woods Nature Preserve Master Plan process identified an opportunity to provide a biking venue for these children and also outlined grant funding options.
- We have also been reviewing the age-appropriateness of our recreational offerings. We have playgrounds for younger children, basketball courts for adults and older kids, and baseball/softball fields for little league. We have large open and wooded areas where people of all ages can walk and run. However, we lack a safe place for children in their middle years to explore independently. Community support for biking alternatives is very high, and today's toddlers will eventually outgrow the playgrounds and need other safe family options. This project is intended to fill an important gap in the Borough's recreational portfolio.

Pump track overview

- Pump tracks are training facilities geared towards mountain bikers to develop skills and upper body strength. They can vary in size: 5,000-10,000 square feet for a neighborhood scale park to 10,000-20,000 square feet for a regional park. A 6,260 square foot pump track area is proposed on an approximately 36,000 square foot parcel to meet the needs of the Borough's mountain biking community.

- The proposed pump track location is in the northern portion of the Randolph Woods parcel, behind the intersection of Ruthland Avenue and First Avenue. It would be accessed via a new sidewalk along the Malvern Fire Company's access drive. A location map at right outlines the area of the proposed project.



- Like all of the Borough's parks, the hours of operation would be dawn to dusk. No lighting would be installed. A dirt track is proposed to minimize noise and stormwater impacts. It would be surrounded by fencing to prevent riders from encroaching on the access drive. A 50-foot buffer, including a 6-foot privacy fence, an earthen berm, and tree plantings, is planned between the track and the residential properties to the west.



Community outreach

- The Randolph Woods Nature Preserve Master Plan process addressed the entire 43-acre parcel and involved the formation of a large task force, numerous public meetings, a community survey, a 45-day public comment period on the draft plan, and a review at a public meeting of Borough Council. The possibility of a pump track was first raised on January 22, 2020. However, trying to address issues pertaining to bike riding in wooded areas where it is not permitted dates back to 2017.
- Prior to the February 2, 2021 Borough Council meeting where the pump track project was discussed, the Borough took extensive efforts to communicate this project to those who would be the most significantly impacted. This included hand-delivering notifications to residents along Ruthland Avenue and meeting with them. Additionally, members of Borough Council and the Borough administration held a private meeting with residents to hear their concerns. We have attempted to address those concerns to the greatest extent possible in the planning process.
- Representatives from Borough Council and the Borough administration also met with the leadership of the Malvern Fire Company to discuss this project. We will continue to engage in communication with them during this project to ensure that this will not impact their service to the community.

Addressing specific misunderstandings

- The only authorization granted has been for the submission of a grant application to the Chester County Municipal Grant Program. There have been no bid documents prepared and final engineering has not been completed. Additionally, the cost discussed recently is only an estimate. This includes estimates for stormwater management, fencing, and a vegetative buffer.
- The proposed project area is part of the 43-acre Randolph Woods parcel, but it is not in the Public Open Space and Conservation (POSC) zoning district or in the area of the conservation easement held by the Willistown Conservation Trust. The project area is located in the I-3 zoning district, which has been designated for municipal uses for a substantial period of time. This I-3 section of the parcel also includes the land for the Borough's Public Works facilities and land currently leased to Comcast.
- The Borough takes environmental stewardship very seriously. The goal is for this project to help improve the health of the larger Randolph Woods parcel by providing an alternative outlet for bikers. Damage in Randolph Woods as a result of biking has been extensive, primarily significant trail erosion. The proposed project area provides minimal environmental benefit because it is physically separated from the rest of the parcel by the access drive, has been in decline, overtaken by invasive species, trash, and dumped construction/maintenance debris.

- We contacted our insurance company immediately after a pump track was first suggested in 2020. This project would not result in an increase to the Borough's premiums. We also spoke with municipalities in the area with similar uses; none reported injury claims at their facilities and praised these as valuable community assets.
- Monitoring this new park would not place a burden on the resources of the Malvern Police Department.
- We anticipate this pump track would be used primarily by local residents who will bike to it. We expect people with driving options to choose larger amenities such as the Chester Valley Trail, Valley Forge Park, and true mountain biking locations further afield. If parking does become an issue, we have options we will pursue as needed. In no case will parking be allowed along the Malvern Fire Company's access drive.

It is the Borough's hope that this project will become a valuable community asset, and we thought it was important to outline the facts and research that has been completed to date. We take pride in our community's parks and recreational facilities, as they are important components of what makes Malvern Borough unique. Ultimately, the Borough is still in the early stages of a much larger process. When there are updates, they will be announced at the appropriate public meetings. The Borough will also continue to work with stakeholders in order to ensure the least impact and best possible outcome.