



Natural
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A Proposal for Use Planning at the Darlington Tract

Chester Heights Borough, Delaware County

May 13, 2021

Natural Lands is pleased to offer this proposal for Use Planning services at the Darlington Tract in Chester Heights. The property contains approximately 11.8 acres of woodlands, a small meadow and wetlands. Chester Creek bounds part of the property to the northeast. A small tributary flows from the nearby development into the site, where it connects to the main stem of the Chester Creek. The site is also bounded by Darlington Road, Baltimore Pike and private properties. Middletown Township's Darlington Park and Darlington Trailhead exist on the other side of Chester Creek. They are connected by Darlington Road and a bridge over the creek.

Chester Heights envisions improving the Darlington Tract to accommodate nature trails and other passive recreation and supporting amenities, which may include parking, signage and stormwater management. Natural Lands is ideally suited to this task, as we responsibly steward and manage nearly 45 nature preserves, many of which are open to the public for passive recreation.

Natural Lands preserves range from rustic and naturalistic to highly designed. For example, Stoneleigh: A Natural Garden, is highly designed, programmed and staffed. Others, such as our Willisbrook Preserve, are maintained simply, with little staff and few improvements. Most of our preserves feature parking areas and trails, similar to what may be proposed at the Darlington Tract. Many of our preserves are surrounded by dense, suburban development, similar to Chester Heights Borough and the surrounding communities. Trails connect our preserves to these communities and to nearby open spaces and provide walking access within the preserves. Based on 60 years of experience creating and managing nature preserves, we believe that we can offer the right mix of improvements and management strategies to prepare the Darlington Tract for the public's enjoyment.

Chester Heights Borough received grant funding from DCNR to acquire the property. This funding requires the site to be used for passive recreation. Additionally, the grant application stated that the site would be managed to pursue three goals:

- Maintain and Enhance Trees and Natural Landscaping
- Connect People to Nature
- Manage Stormwater Naturally

We offer this proposal which includes site design, land management recommendations and a process for public participation which will result in a plan which meets the needs



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of the citizens of Chester Heights Borough while complying with the requirements of the grant funding.

Scope of Work

We offer the following scope of work, to be completed by Natural Lands' staff of landscape architects, stewardship planners and GIS professionals.

1. Preparation of Base Maps – As part of the DCNR grant application process, Natural Lands has already prepared a site location map and aerial photograph map. However, we will also need to prepare additional base maps which show the existing features, including, but not limited to existing trails and roads, historic aerial photographs, soils, vegetation, topography and hydrology. (\$750)
2. Site Visits – Our landscape architects and stewardship planners will visit the site multiple times, as needed, to understand the site and discover its highlights and challenges. (\$1000)
3. PNDI – Natural Lands staff will complete a Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index (PNDI) assessment of the site, which will identify any plant or animal species of special concern which may inhabit the site. A PNDI assessment had been prepared as part of the DCNR grant application in 2019. However, these reports “expire” after only two years. Therefore, we will prepare an updated PNDI report. (\$100)
4. Site Analysis- We will prepare a graphic site analysis plan which shows our findings from site visits, and the study and analysis of base maps and other published information. The site analysis inventories and analyzes the existing physical features and other factors such as noise, traffic and views. (\$800)
5. Preliminary Site Planning – Natural Lands' landscape architects will review the site analysis, further assess the site and develop recommendations for improvements, based on physical features, and good planning practices. (\$500) Recommendations will likely include:
 - a. Parking – Natural Lands may design parking areas which provide an adequate number of spaces in relation to the uses proposed at the sites. Parking will be sited to be sensitive to the natural features, views and vistas found on site. Additionally, Natural Lands will coordinate a meeting between Chester Heights Borough and Middletown Township to discuss the potential for sharing existing parking and connecting the two neighboring sites.
 - b. Trail System – Natural Lands will prepare a conceptual trail plan which provides circulation to and from the major elements of the sites, opportunities for passive recreation and connection to surrounding neighborhoods and other points of interest. Construction details will not be provided, but examples of potential surfaces and construction methods will be provided as appropriate. Bridges, boardwalks and other structures which may be necessary will be located on the plan. Examples of these structures will be provided as well.



- c. Land Management Strategies – Natural Lands will provide recommendations for land management as it relates to safe use and appropriate stewardship of the site and trail maintenance. Recommendations may include reforestation, installation of riparian buffers, hazard tree removal and other management and restoration measures.
 - d. Miscellaneous improvements and site furniture – Natural Lands will provide locations for typical park amenities which may include benches, tables, fencing, refuse and recycling receptacles, bird boxes, bird blinds, dog related amenities, trail related amenities and other appropriate features. We will also provide examples which should be considered conceptual, to be used as a guide, not necessarily as specifications for construction.
6. Site Plans – Natural Lands staff will prepare a graphic plan which shows the proposed improvements, primarily focused on proposed trails, and potentially parking. It will also include conceptual planting and land management areas. (\$1000)
 7. Narrative Report – We will prepare a brief narrative to explain the design process behind the site analysis, site plan, and landscape plan, including the results of associated studies, public participation, and recommendations for land management strategies. (\$2500)
 8. Public Participation– Natural Lands staff will meet with officials, members of the public or Borough representatives twice during the life of the project:
 - a. 1st Meeting – Natural Lands will present a draft plan and supporting information at a public meeting. At this meeting we will collect feedback from the public to gauge support for the project and to inform potential revisions. This presentation could occur at a regularly scheduled meeting of Borough Council, the Planning Commission or other existing Borough commission, or it could occur at a specially scheduled meeting focusing only on this project. (\$1000)
 - b. 2nd Meeting – Natural Lands will present a final plan to Borough Council. At this meeting we would request that the plan be accepted or adopted, potentially with conditions for minor revisions should Council see fit. (\$750)
 9. Additional Meetings:
 - a. Middletown Township – Natural Lands will coordinate and conduct one meeting between Chester Heights Borough and Middletown Township to discuss possibilities for sharing parking, connecting the two sites and to explore the potential for additional partnerships. (\$400)
 - b. Chester Heights Engineer – Natural Lands will conduct one meeting with the Borough Engineer to discuss the site, stormwater management, bridges, infrastructure, access and other issues which may benefit from review and recommendations from an engineer. **Please note that compensation for the Borough Engineer’s time is not included in this proposal.** (\$400)



Schedule

Natural Lands provides the schedule below as a guide. However, we expect some dates to change in response to vacations and holidays. We will communicate any conflicts as soon as possible.

Task by Month	August	September	October	November	December
Creation of Base Maps & PNDI					
First Site Visit					
Additional Site Visits					
Draft Site Analysis					
Meeting w/ Borough Engineer					
Meeting w/ Middletown					
Draft Graphic Concept Plan					
Draft Narrative Plan					
First Public Meeting					
Second Public Meeting (Borough Council)					
Final Plan Production					

Chester Heights Borough Responsibilities

Natural Lands will depend on Chester Heights Borough’s staff, volunteers and elected officials to inform and support the project. We recommend Chester Heights Borough be specifically responsible for the following:

1. Compensating the Borough Engineer or other Borough consultants who may become involved in the project. We expect the Engineer to provide input, but we do not expect more than four to five hours of his time. It seems more efficient and cost-effective for the Borough to pay him directly, rather than entering sub-consultant contracts.
2. Properly advertising, coordinating, and publicizing the two public meetings.
3. Providing typical information about the site such as deeds, plans or other Borough documents.



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Cost

Natural Lands proposes to complete the scope of work described above at a total cost not to exceed \$9,200.

If you find this arrangement acceptable, please sign below.

Chester Heights Borough

9/22/21

Date

Natural Lands

9/24/21

Date