

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 29, 2021
Save Williamson Park

savewilliamsonpark.com
savewilliamsonpark@gmail.com

Facebook: @SaveWilliamsonPark
Instagram: @save_williamson_park



LEGAL ACTION FILED TO PROTECT HISTORIC COMMUNITY PARK IN MORRISVILLE

Williamson Park is Morrisville's municipal park and community gathering place, located along the Delaware Riverfront in Morrisville, PA. Since the Park's opening in 1939, it has been the venue for community events, concerts, picnics, carnivals, sledding and family gatherings. It is also the major recreational resource for the people of the Borough. It's the home of Morrisville Little League, 1955 World Champions, having 8 baseball and softball fields, including 3 lighted fields. It has basketball and tennis courts, a stage, a picnic pavilion, tables and benches, room to relax under the big old trees, play, exercise, and walk or run on a scenic trail atop the Morrisville Levee with a stunning view of the falls of the Delaware River, the Park, and the capitol dome in Trenton, New Jersey.

The Park was made possible by a gift from the estate of Henry S. Williamson. The Morrisville Borough leaders who created this park in 1939 were visionaries who understood the need to preserve land for those who could not afford their own open spaces.

The public park is threatened by a proposal by Select Morrisville, LLC to build a mega-complex of apartments and commercial buildings, billing it as a pretend "town center", not taking into account that the actual town center is located a few blocks away and in dire need of revitalization.

The Pennsylvania Constitution's Environmental Rights Amendment, the Public Trust Doctrine, and the Dedicated or Donated Properties Act all provide legal protections for Morrisville's actively used public park. Courts have repeatedly issued decisions that determined that properties dedicated and accepted for public purposes, and which continue to serve the interest of the public, must remain as public parkland. A municipality cannot determine a 'better use'.

When Select Morrisville made its first proposal in August 2019 and a second one in December 2020, Morrisville Borough did not immediately reject the idea of giving up its irreplaceable park land for commercial development, which would have been the most ethical and responsible response. Instead, it passed a resolution "to accept the conceptual proposal submitted by Select Morrisville for the Williamson Park Town Square Project and to authorize Borough staff and professionals to engage with Select Morrisville and the Bucks County Redevelopment Authority to aid Morrisville Select's completion and submission of a full subdivision and land development plan application for the Project in compliance with all Borough Ordinances and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code."

Morrisville residents and Park friends created the group, Save Williamson Park (SWP) to ensure that Williamson Park remains whole and available for its original, intended purposes. SWP has highlighted the Park's long standing and continued public service of providing active and passive recreational opportunities to the whole community. It is hopeful that the current legal action will lead the Borough Council to reconsider its standpoint and find other ways to develop the current town for the benefit of all.

Unfortunately, the Borough has not recognized the legal futility of this endeavor. Therefore, residents are standing up to protect the Park from development for any use other than as a public park. SWP has filed a suit in the Orphans' Court of Bucks County to compel the Borough to cease its planning activities and comply with applicable laws. We are asking the court for injunctive relief to prevent the Borough from taking any further steps to support the sale, transfer, redevelopment, alienation, condemnation of Williamson Park.