

CHAPTER TWO: RECREATION, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

This chapter presents Baltimore County’s vision for recreation, parks, and open space. This vision was presented in an abbreviated manner within Baltimore County Master Plan 2010 and serves herein as an update to the vision of the 2005-2006 Baltimore County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan. This chapter also serves as the basis for the recreation and parks capital projects listed in “Appendix C – Acquisition, Development, and Rehabilitation Priorities,” that are summarized herein.

Recreation, parks and open space play a vital role in making the State of Maryland an attractive place in which to live. The State and Baltimore County have long been dedicated to ensuring that sufficient, diverse public parklands and open spaces are available to the citizens of Maryland, and that a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities are made available for the equally broad range of leisure tastes and preferences possessed by the populace. No single agency, jurisdiction or entity is capable of providing everything that is needed to meet recreational demands and preserve needed parklands. Instead, recreation and parks opportunities are provided at a variety of levels by different public agencies that complement one another, from the federal level all the way down to small localities. It is important to note that Baltimore County does not have any incorporated localities or towns, and that its URDL-based growth management policy instead directs where the majority of development occurs. This means that Baltimore County Recreation and Parks is responsible for nearly all public recreational needs that a typical incorporated town or locality in another jurisdiction might provide for its citizens. The County’s recreation and park system reflects this dynamic, consisting of a wide variety of parks and facilities that serve various spectrums of the population from countywide down to individual neighborhoods.

RECREATION, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE GOALS

Following are the State and County goals relating to recreation, parks and open space. The State’s goals have their foundation in the visions of the State Planning Act, while the County’s reflect the planning policies identified within Baltimore County Master Plan 2020. Additionally, the County’s goals are supportive of and help to achieve those of the State.

State Goals for Recreation, Parks and Open Space

Within the State of Maryland, the following overriding goals are in place to help define the State’s parks and recreation vision, providing a framework from which State and local parks and recreation departments work together to provide quality leisure opportunities for Maryland’s citizens and visitors.

- Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily accessible to all of its citizens, and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.

- Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make communities, counties, and the State more desirable places to live, work, and visit.



Wilson Point Park in the Middle River community is an example of how parks may be used as key components of community revitalization efforts

- Use State investment in parks, recreation, and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local comprehensive / master plans.
- To the greatest degree feasible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile, and help to protect natural open spaces and resources.
- Complement infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth through investment in neighborhood and community parks and facilities.
- Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands at a rate that equals or exceeds the rate that land is developed at a statewide level.

The State of Maryland and local jurisdictions together strive to achieve common goals by using a multi-tier approach that helps ensure that a wide variety of recreation and leisure opportunities are available to the citizenry and visitors to the state. At the state level, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides and administers state parks, forests, natural resource areas, wildlands, and a variety of other public lands whose primary emphasis is upon natural resource-based forms of recreation and preservation of key natural resources and environments. While certain State parklands and preservation areas include some forms of recreation that are not reliant upon the presence of natural resources, the vast majority of recreational pursuits – from hiking, to swimming, to hunting, to camping – are natural resource-based.

At the county or local level the emphasis is much different, with county and municipal recreation and parks agencies being responsible for making a much wider variety of recreational

opportunities available from the neighborhood and community levels upwards. Most county and local parks cannot rival the vast acreages associated with the majority of state parks and lands. Baltimore County's largest park, the ~1,100-acre Oregon Ridge Park, is quite small in comparison to the 18,000-acre Gunpowder Falls State Park that stretches between Baltimore and Harford Counties, and the 16,000-acre Patapsco Valley State Park, which straddles Baltimore, Howard, Carroll and Anne Arundel Counties. County and local parks are often more facility-intensive, providing both indoor (e.g., gymnasiums, activity/multi-purpose rooms, indoor sports fields, auditoriums, interpretive centers) and outdoor (e.g., ball fields and diamonds, sports courts, playgrounds) recreation facilities. Additionally, most counties including Baltimore County provide green/open space at the local level, including natural or predominantly undeveloped areas within urbanized communities that may not have convenient access to nature's grandeur within state parks. The hundreds of preserved open spaces, greenways and stream valleys throughout Baltimore County help to "green" the urbanized areas of the County, making them more livable while at the same time providing numerous environmental benefits.

Progress Towards Achieving the 2005-2006 LPPRP's Goals and Objectives for Recreation, Parks and Open Space

To reflect this plan's role as an update of the prior LPPRP the goals, objectives and priorities as presented in the '05-'06 plan follow, with assessments (in italics) of any progress that has been made towards meeting those goals.

1. Acquire a variety of parklands and recreation sites in efforts to meet the State goal of providing thirty acres of parkland per thousand citizens within the County.
 - Utilize Program Open Space (POS) as a key funding source for the acquisition of parkland. Support efforts to secure the utilization of 100% of State real estate transfer tax for land preservation programs, as was the intent when the tax was enacted.

Approximately 390 acres within 11 separate sites were acquired with the use of \$13.7 million in local-side POS funding between FY's 2006 and 2011. These acquisitions range from park additions between 0.4 and 50 acres, to the purchase of the 6.5-acre former Perring Racquet Club to serve as a regional indoor recreation facility, to the POS and LWCF (federal land and Water Conservation Fund) assisted acquisition of the ~150 Rolling Mill Farm property that now serves as the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park. Additionally, DNR utilized state-side POS funding for a joint project with Baltimore County Recreation and Parks and the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability to preserve the ~250-acre BeeTree Preserve in northern Baltimore County through the first conservation and public recreation access easement in the County.

Efforts to fully protect POS have had only moderate success. The fiscal difficulties at the local, state and national levels in recent years led to a number of POS-impacting budgetary measures approved by the Maryland General Assembly. During the 2007 special legislative session a budgetary measure was approved that annually redirects \$21 million or more in POS funding from the counties to pay for the operations of the Maryland Park Service. This translates to a loss of approximately \$2.8 million in POS funding each year for Baltimore County. Additionally, approximately \$103 million in

local/county POS funding was diverted during the 2010 Maryland legislative session to help alleviate the State's budget crisis. Fortunately, the Governor and General Assembly concurrently legislated that this diversion would be paid back to the counties over a multi-year period, which has since been extended and is presently slated to run through fiscal year 2014. The FY'12 annual POS allocations for the counties was partially deferred as a result of a legislative action, allowing for the funding to be made available to the counties in thirds over a 3-year period rather than in their entirety at the start of FY'12. No new POS allocation was provided to the counties for FY'13, with the allocations instead being restricted to pay backs of what was taken or due in prior fiscal years. The above legislative actions have greatly diminished the flow of POS funding to the counties, and has in some instances diminished the confidence that counties have in POS as a reliable park funding source. Maryland DNR has itself been hindered in its efforts by reduction in state-side POS funding for their capital projects and partnership projects with local jurisdictions.

- Strategically target all available parkland funding resources to areas of existing and projected future needs, whether these needs be acreage-based (to meet the State acreage goal), facility-based (to provide land for needed recreational facilities) resource-based (to preserve significant or endangered natural areas), or policy-based.

The map on the following page, titled "Parks and Recreation Land Acquisition: FY's 2006-2011," displays properties acquired via purchase or donation from fiscal years 2006 through 2011. Eleven of the fourteen sites acquired are either within or at the very edge of the urban portion of the County, which generally serves as the County's Priority Funding Area. Two of the three rural area acquisitions (Rolling Mill Farm and BeeTree Preserve) were largely targeted for resource-based purposes, as described previously within the prior bullet. Seven properties were acquired to serve as additions to existing parks and recreation sites, including one (Fullerton) to provide much needed parking for park patrons, another (Vincent Farm) to allow for the construction of a public school recreation center, and a third (Concrete Homes) to enable the construction of the Watersedge Community Center. The Mount Vista Golf Course Property, formerly owned by the Baltimore County Revenue Authority, was transferred at no cost to the Department of Recreation and Parks, and together with the adjacent earlier-purchased Schmidt Property will help to serve the growing Kingsville and White Marsh council areas, which are grouped administratively within a single community office. The Smith Property – Ashmere Road, Somogyi and Karll Trust acquisitions provide sites that may be developed as parks to meet existing and future needs, and the Perring Racquet Club acquisition helped to meet growing demand for indoor recreation activities on a regional basis.

- Employ the Baltimore County development process to provide quality local open space, obtain fees-in-lieu where appropriate (to help fund park acquisition and development), and to secure vital greenway connections. Resolve existing problems with the open space dedication process to ensure that local open spaces are deeded to the County in a timely and accurate manner.

Over 490 acres of land in the form of 119 combined local open spaces, greenways and flood plains were deeded via the development process to Baltimore County and assigned to DRP between FY's 2006 and 2011. These sites range in size from less than one-tenth of an acre to 32 acres. This does not include similar properties, including forest conservation reservations, that were assigned to the County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability or the Department of Public Works, nor are open spaces owned by homeowner or condo-owner associations counted within these figures. While the greenways and flood plains are predominantly natural areas with only limited recreational opportunity provided, the majority of local open spaces consist of open, relatively flat green spaces that are suitable for such activities as dog walking or playing catch. Approximately ten of the dedicated greenway acquisitions made it possible to construct the first phases of the Red Run Greenway Trail network in the Owings Mills Growth Area.

A total of nearly \$2.8 million in fees-in-lieu of open space were collected between July of 2005 and November, 2011. Finally, a number of development agreements have included developer-funded and constructed recreational improvements such as new ball diamonds, paths and playgrounds.



Playgrounds such as this, situated at the Bonnie View Local Open Space in the Pikesville community, are sometimes provided as part of a development's open space agreement. Such convenient walk-to recreational opportunities often serve the surrounding community in addition to the specific development in which they are constructed.

- Revise the Greenways Map that appears in Baltimore County Master Plan 2010 and Baltimore County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan: 2000-2004 to create new designated greenways, and formulate a comprehensive greenways plan.

Though this specific recommendation has not been achieved as written, other activities that have transpired since 2005 have served to promote and lay the groundwork for achieving the general intent of this action. Additional greenway and greenway trail recommendations continue to be made within individual community plans. Further, the County's new bicycle and pedestrian access plans – one for Eastern Baltimore County and another for Western Baltimore County - provide a much more extensive perspective on bike and pedestrian corridors, and include hundreds of recommendations that may be applied within the development process and the County's capital improvement programs. These plans also spurred the establishment of the Baltimore County Pedestrian and Bicycle Access Advisory Committee in 2011, which is charged with the responsibility of devising implementation strategies for the bicycle and pedestrian access plans and for the general promotion of expanded safe pedestrian and bicycle access countywide.

- Exercise all means necessary for the acquisition of key prospective park sites, up to and including the powers of master plan conflict and condemnation.

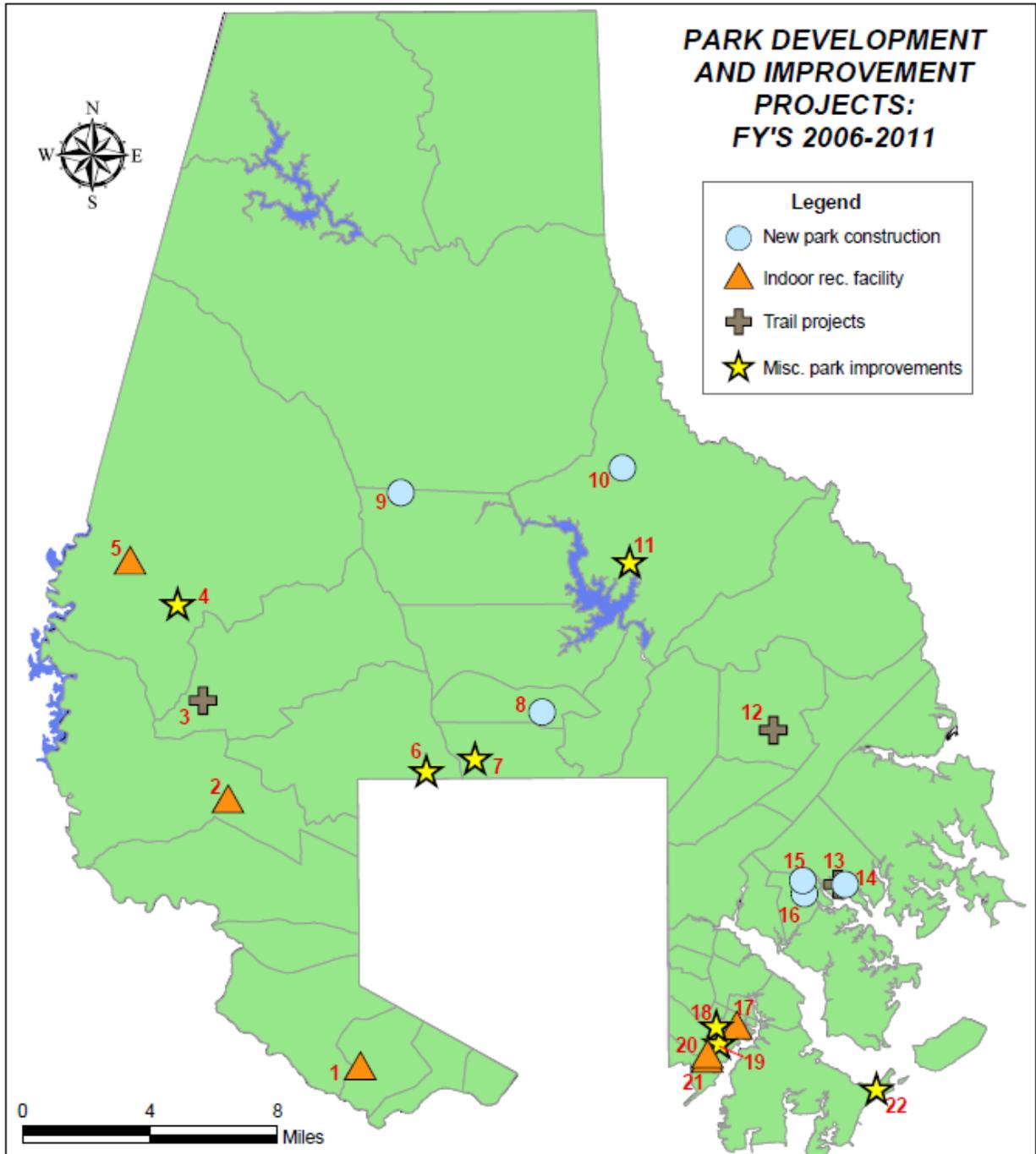
A single condemnation proceeding was initiated since the prior LPPRP, involving the acquisition of a key parcel of property to serve as an addition to Robert E. Lee Park.

- Work with landowners to secure tax credits and similar agreements that will enable them to donate (or sell at a reduced value) their land to the County if such properties would be of sufficient benefit to the County.

While no properties have been donated to the County in recent years, additional lands have come to the County through the tax sale process, triggered when privately-owned open space retained by a developer or a home or condo-owners association goes to tax sale as a result of the owners defaulting on property taxes. As a matter of practice, DRP seeks to obtain these open spaces (at no cost) through the tax sale process, which makes such lands available to the County prior to going to tax sale. This serves as another manner in which open space is preserved without acquisition-related costs.

- Provide a diversity of recreational facilities and areas to meet the needs of Baltimore County citizens, and to adequately serve the organized programs of the local recreation and parks councils.

Baltimore County continues to provide additional recreational facilities of a wide variety, though economic conditions have resulted in significant reductions in park spending in recent years and continue to be a major limiting factor. The majority of recent projects have involved capital renovations to existing parks and recreation facilities to keep them safe, usable and attractive. Fewer new park or site improvement projects are being initiated as the need for rehabilitation is deemed the top priority. See the map on the following page, as well as the next four action bullets, for progress reports for various types of new parks and facilities.



**PARK DEVELOPMENT
AND IMPROVEMENT
PROJECTS:
FY'S 2006-2011**

- Legend**
- New park construction
 - ▲ Indoor rec. facility
 - ⊕ Trail projects
 - ★ Misc. park improvements

- 1. Arbutus Recreation Ctr. Dev't.
- 2. Randallstown Comm. Ctr. Dev't.
- 3. Red Run Trails
- 4. Hannah More Park Dog Park, Skate Park and Amphitheater
- 5. Reisterstown Reg'l. Sportsplex
- 6. Bonnie View Playground
- 7. Robert E. Lee Park Dog Park
- 8. Olympian Park Construction

- 9. Ag. Center - Farm Park Const.
- 10. Sweet Air Park Const., incl. Jacksonville Comm. Center
- 11. Cloverland Park Rugby Field
- 12. Indian Rock Park Trail
- 13. Hawthorne Community Trail
- 14. Wilson Point Park Const.
- 15. Waterview Park Const.

- 16. Fields at Renaissance Park Construction
- 17. Inverness Comm. Ctr. Dev't.
- 18. Stansbury Park Pavilion
- 19. Chesterwood Park Field and Sand Volleyball Court
- 20. Watersedge Comm. Ctr. Dev't.
- 21. Sollers Pt. Multi-Purp. Ctr. Dev't.
- 22. Millers Isl. Park Multi-Use Court

- Provide a sufficient quantity of traditional outdoor recreation facilities such as ball diamonds, athletic fields, sports courts, playgrounds and picnic areas. In the case of athletic fields, seek to provide enough fields to meet existing demands while at the same time allowing worn and de-vegetated fields to be “rested” and rehabilitated.

Many of the star and circle symbols on the prior map, representing miscellaneous park improvements and new park construction respectively, involved the construction of traditional outdoor recreation facilities between fiscal years 2005-2011. New fields and/or ball diamonds were provided at Sweet Air Park, Wilson Point Park, The Fields at Renaissance Park and Chesterwood Park. A small multi-purpose court was constructed at Millers Island Park, a property leased from Maryland DNR to serve as a neighborhood park for the Millers Island peninsula. Developer-funded playgrounds were installed at Bonnie View and Waterview, at Sweet Air Park (assisted by the fundraising efforts of local citizens), and at Wilson Point Park and The Fields at Renaissance Park. Picnic pavilions were erected at Sweet Air, Wilson Point, Chesterwood, and Fields at Renaissance Parks.

- Provide sufficient indoor facilities and access time to meet expanding demands for year-round recreation, to serve programs that require indoor space, and to facilitate use by community and civic organizations.

Recognizing the importance of providing year-round recreational opportunities for the public, Baltimore County has continued its efforts to provide recreation, community and multi-purpose centers, many of which serve multiple uses including recreation. Since the start of FY’06 eight new centers have been constructed countywide. Six were individual center construction projects (triangles on map), while two (Jacksonville Community Center at Sweet Air Park and Stembidge Community Center at the Fields at Renaissance Park) were constructed as part of new park development projects.

The diversity of facilities and recreational opportunities at the centers has expanded in recent years. The Randallstown Community Center, at 58,000 square feet, is the County’s largest community center, and features a 25-meter, six-lane indoor pool operated by the YMCA, a 300-seat performance hall, and computer/tech center, in addition to the gymnasium and activity room facilities that are traditionally provided at the centers. The Reisterstown Sportsplex, operated under a cooperative agreement between DRP and the Baltimore County Revenue Authority, features an indoor sports field on one side of the building, and indoor ice rink on the other. The 14,400-s.f. Jacksonville Community Center features both a senior center and recreation center, and represents a major improvement over the nearby jointly-used Paper Mill Center that it replaced. The County’s latest indoor recreation facility, the 28,000-s.f. Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center, features a gymnasium, combination auditorium/multi-purpose room, class/activity rooms, a tech center, community museum, commercial kitchen and library. In addition to these indoor recreation facilities built at existing park sites, the former Perring Racquet Club was purchased and renovated to serve as a regional recreation center and features the County’s only public facility with two indoor sports fields.

- Construct additional trails and paths to meet growing demands for linear-based recreation (walking, jogging, bicycling, etc.). Work with County and State agencies to establish

pedestrian and bicycle connections between parks, residential areas and other points of interest, in conjunction with plans such as the Eastern Baltimore County Pedestrian and Bicycle Access Plan.

Trail construction projects were completed at three sites between fiscal years 2006 and 2011. The Red Run Trail Network in Owings Mills consists of trails with both paved and mulch surfaces, and represent the early stages of what is intended to be a trail network that will reach virtually all corners of the Owings Mills Growth Area. A short paved path was constructed at Indian Rock Park in Perry Hall as the first segment of what is expected to be a large regional trail system. The third new trail, the Hawthorne Community Trail, is a network of both on and off-road segments that run throughout the peninsula-based Hawthorne community, connecting to Hawthorne-Midthorne Park, Darkhead Creek Park, Kingston Park and Hawthorne Elementary School Recreation Center. The Hawthorne Trail is planned to connect with a larger regional trail that will connect the communities of Middle River and Chase. Additional trail expansion also took place at Marshy Point Park and Nature Center (not on map) as part of a greater park improvement project. The new park projects at Sweet Air, Wilson Point, and the Fields at Renaissance Park also included paved paths networks that help diversify the recreational uses of those sites.



Boardwalk overlook with interpretive sign, situated along a portion of the Red Run Greenway trail network in Owings Mills.

- Provide new types of recreational facilities, where appropriate, and where sufficient demand has been expressed by County citizens.

The County continues to develop new, non-traditional recreational facilities to meet the diversified recreational demands of the citizenry. Public facility “firsts” in Baltimore County between fiscal years 2006 and 2011 included indoor sports fields (Reisterstown Sportsplex, Southeast Regional Recreation Center and Northeast Regional Recreation Center), indoor ice rink (Reisterstown Sportsplex), and formalized dog parks (Hannah

More Park, Robert E. Lee Park). Cloverland Park became the home of the County's only public cricket field.

- Provide appropriate service amenities such as restrooms, storage areas, water fountains, parking areas, sidewalks and paths, and facility/security lighting.

The appropriate types of service amenities continue to be incorporated into new park development projects such as those at Sweet Air Park, Wilson Point Park and the Fields at Renaissance Park. Additionally, many other support amenities are provided as needed through minor park improvement projects (not displayed on map). One example is the addition of storage buildings at nine parks and an equal number of school recreation centers. These small structures are particularly helpful in supporting the organized programs of the recreation councils. Another important type of project is parking expansion at sites that are lacking in parking, with recent examples being such projects at Belmont Park, Northwest Regional Park, Oella Park and Center, and Chesterwood Park.

2. Renovate and rehabilitate parks to address the issues of facility aging and outdated recreational infrastructure.

As capital funding has dwindled, the need for prioritizing the use of available funding has become even more essential. Park and facility rehabilitation projects to keep sites and facilities safe, functional and attractive are among the highest priorities at present.

- Evaluate the functionality and condition of the County's older parks, and conduct appropriate site redesign, rehabilitation and improvement projects.

Two large-scale park rehabilitation/modification project took place since the prior LPPRP, both in southeast Baltimore County. The first involved the transformation of Chesterwood Park in the Dundalk community. A former Baltimore County Highways Shop was relocated from the site, with its land area being converted to park uses including a lighted athletic field, storage building and an expanded and upgraded parking lot. Other site renovations were also completed within the original park area, including rehabilitation of picnic pavilions, repair and expansion of walkways, and installation of a sand volleyball court. These site enhancements and renovations allow the park, long a popular picnicking venue, to offer an even wider array of recreational opportunities. The second, more recent project of this nature is the ongoing transformation of the Sollers Point High School Recreation Center to a park and multi-use community center.

- Conduct comprehensive capital renovation programs, including existing programs for playground equipment, courts, fields and facility lighting, and parking lots; seek opportunities for the expansion of such programs to other types of recreational facilities and support amenities.

The hundreds of recreational facilities operated and maintained by Baltimore County and the DRP demand constant attention, requiring that they be regularly evaluated and that priorities for renovations are set. This form of project is typically the most numerous of the capital project types, reflecting both the extent and age of the County's recreational infrastructure. In the period including fiscal years 2006-2011: more than 75 tennis, multi-purpose and specialized recreation courts have been renovated; a similar

number of playground renovations/retrofits took place, involving work ranging from replacement of defunct or vandalized equipment, to surface mulch replacement; standard field renovations have taken place at twelve sites; over a dozen lighting renovations projects, ranging from large field lighting projects with more energy-efficient systems to smaller parking lot lighting jobs, have occurred; and a similar number of parking renovation projects were completed.

- In cases where facilities are no longer needed or desired, explore opportunities for re-utilizing or retrofitting the facilities for other recreational purposes.

There are numerous reasons why the County may elect to remove or modify an existing recreational facility. In some cases a facility has become disused, and is removed as unnecessary, or retrofitted into some other facility type/use. The existing tennis courts at Hawthorne Park were converted to a soccer court in early FY'06 as a result of community input. Some facilities may be removed as a result of repeated vandalism. A repeatedly vandalized playground was removed from the Rutherford Heights Open Space after vandals burnt the playground equipment. Use issues may also arise and lead to facility removal or modification, ranging from foul language and other poor behavior, to illicit or criminal activities, to unsanctioned after-hours facility use or abuse. Such issues have led to the removal of basketball hoops at numerous multi-purpose courts at parks and school recreation centers.

3. Participate in, and play a vital role within, community revitalization programs such as the County's "renaissance" initiative.

- Provide quality parks and recreational facilities within community revitalization areas and renaissance communities. *Note: The "renaissance" initiative has been replaced by the designation of Community Enhancement Areas (see definition on page 7).*
- Actively participate in community redesign processes, recognizing the important role that parks play in providing and maintaining attractive, healthy neighborhoods.
- Maintain and improve parks in older communities to ensure that these sites remain attractive and functional, and do not contribute to community degradation.

Baltimore County has recognized the role that parks and recreation sites play in community revitalization and stabilization. A number of the major park projects took place between fiscal years 2006 and 2011 helped to achieve the first two bulleted actions above. In the Essex-Middle River area alone there were four new park projects that transformed former land uses to provide diverse recreational opportunities—Wilson Point Park with its waterfront promenade, piers, boat ramp, picnic facilities, pathways, playground and athletic field; the Fields at Renaissance Park and its community center, ball diamond, athletic field, pathways, picnic facilities, playground and multi-purpose court; the smaller Chesapeake Gateway Park with its landscaped grounds and seating area with views of the water; and the developer-constructed Waterview Park, a small walk-to neighborhood park with its playground and short loop path. The construction of the expansive Randallstown Community Center continued the parks and recreation component of revitalization efforts along the Liberty Road corridor that also included the 2002 construction of Stevenswood Park. Numerous FY'06-'11 park renovation and enhancement projects likewise helped to achieve the aims of the third bulleted action.

Belmont Park, in the Parkville community, was enhanced through the construction of a much-needed parking addition and installation of two picnic pavilions, along with the renovation and expansion of the park's playground. Carriage Hills Park in the Liberty Road corridor was enhanced with a new parking lot, walkway, and picnic pavilion, as well as a renovated and expanded playground. Chesterwood Park in Dundalk underwent the enhancement project described previously under goal #2. The Hawthorne Community Trail and renovations and improvements to Hawthorne-Midthorne Park helped to maintain and expand recreational opportunities in that peninsula-based community.



The new picnic pavilion and paved path at Carriage Hills Park in Randallstown expands the park's recreational opportunities

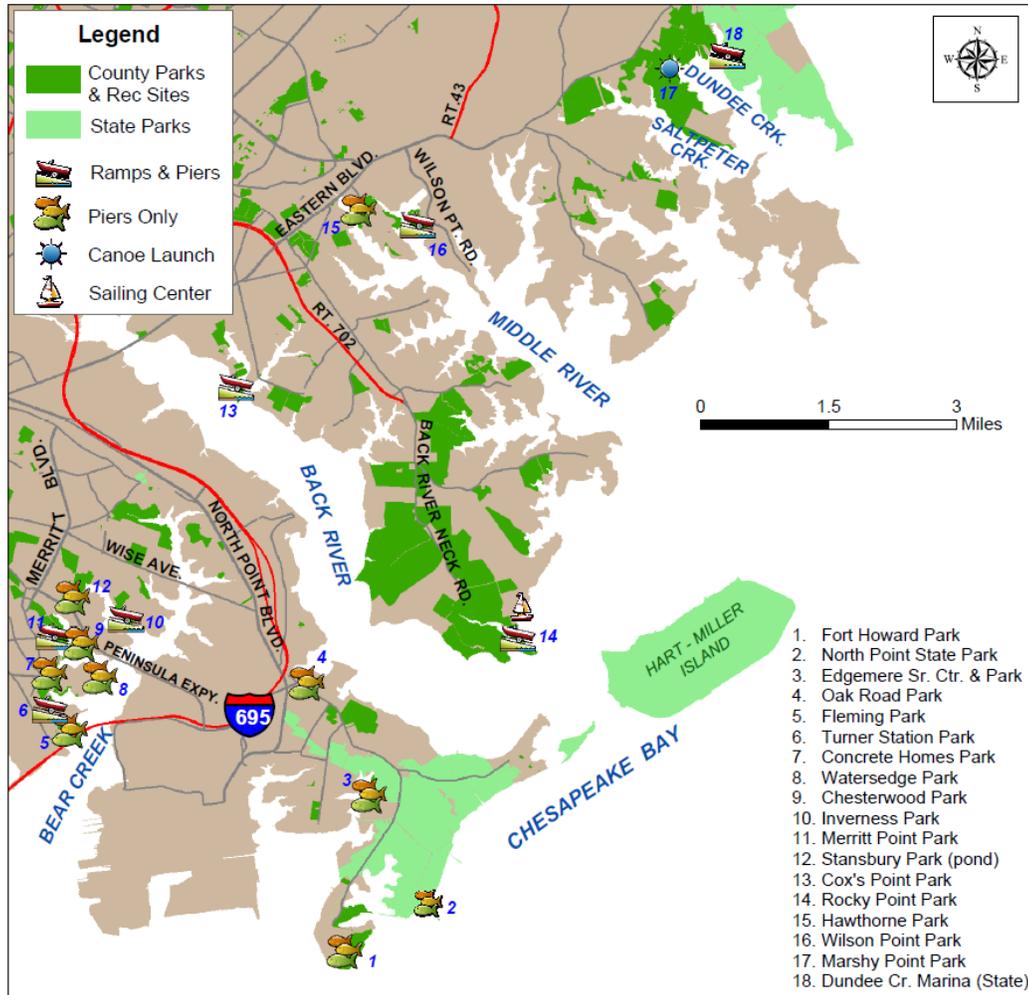
4. Expand waterfront access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

- Pursue opportunities for the acquisition of waterfront land to serve as parkland.

Two properties acquired since the writing of the last LPPRP, the Somogyi and Karll Trust Properties, feature limited waterfront (Somogyi) or tidal wetlands (Karll). No other waterfront park sites were acquired in that time period.

- Provide an assortment of recreational facilities at the County's waterfront parks, ranging from water-specific facilities such as boat ramps and fishing piers, to general amenities including picnic pavilions, playgrounds and paths.

Baltimore County continues to develop and enhance waterfront parks to offer diverse recreational opportunities. The map on the following page displays waterfront facilities available in eastern-southeastern Baltimore County, where the majority of the County's shoreline is situated. The map does not show the County's public beaches at Rocky Point and Oregon Ridge Parks, nor the State's Hammerman Area of Gunpowder Falls State Park. Neither does it display the Patapsco River-based boat ramp and pier at Southwest Area Park or water-based facilities at the reservoirs, including the boat ramp situated at the Loch Raven Fishing Center.



A few noteworthy waterfront projects took place between fiscal years 2006 and 2011. The previously described Wilson Point Park construction project created a waterfront boardwalk promenade with piers, used by walkers and fishermen alike. The park's double-lane boat ramp has provided conveniently situated public boating access to fill the void that existed between public ramps at Rocky Point Park and the State's Dundee Creek Marina. Wilson Point also features other amenities including paths, picnic pavilions and a playground that allow visitors to enjoy a pleasant day with expansive waterfront views. At the more natural end of the spectrum are the improvements that were constructed at Marshy Point Park and Nature Center, situated on a peninsula in eastern Baltimore County. In addition to an expansion of the nature center building, recent park improvements included canoe and kayak facilities (launch pier and canoe storage building), construction of an access road to an isolated section of the park, and additional trails that lead to a number of scenic waterfront overlooks.

- Utilize the Marshy Point Nature Center at Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks Park as a key platform for providing citizens of the region with opportunities to experience, learn about, and gain an appreciation for the Chesapeake Bay and its ecosystem.

With its location on two major tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, Marshy Point (now named Marshy Point Park and Nature Center) is perfectly situated to serve as a hands-on venue for learning about the Bay and tidal ecosystems. The expansion of the nature center added a large classroom to better accommodate the school groups that visit the park to learn about the natural environment, including all fifth grade students attending Baltimore County's public schools. A host of interpretive programs take place at the park and nature center, from one-day programs and events, to school group visits, to lengthier nature camps. The facilities that have been added, such as the trails and the canoe launch and storage building, provide greater access for both organized programs and general recreational use. At present DRP is working with a non-profit group that wishes to construct the next section of the regional greenway trail that passes through the park, as a memorial effort. The trail is ultimately planned to connect a series of public lands including Chase Elementary School Recreation Center, Eastern Regional Park, the Tidewater Village Open Space, Marshy Point, and the Hammerman Area of Gunpowder Falls State Park.

- Evaluate potential Bay-related uses, both recreational and environmental, for the 400+ acres former Shapiro Property on the Back River Neck peninsula.

No progress has been made to date, with a portion of the property continuing to serve as an airfield. A limited portion of the site is also used by a model aircraft group.

- Evaluate all existing waterfront park sites, both developed and undeveloped, to explore opportunities for enhancement while at the same time undertaking appropriate environmental conservation measures.

This is an ongoing process that is impacted by the availability of capital funding resources. Recent declines in funding, as well as policy changes to certain grants programs, have resulted in the delay or cancellation of some proposed projects, including the addition of a floating pier at Fleming Park and Community Center, and renovations to the storm-damaged pier at Fort Howard Park. The establishment of the County's first formalized water trails for canoe and kayak access was proposed as part of the County's efforts to commemorate the upcoming bicentennial of the War of 1812 and its Battle of North Point, but there is insufficient funding to implement such plans at present. Environmental conservation efforts continue to take place as needed, particularly in the form of shoreline restoration projects managed by the County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability. Measures to improve water quality and protect the Chesapeake Bay continue to be made at parks and waterfront recreation sites, ranging from planting of forest buffers as was done at Chesterwood Park, to the establishment of naturalized no-mow areas such as the one that was included within the Wilson Point Park development project. The County is hopeful that funding associated with major port dredging projects will allow some projects such as those described above to proceed.

5. Pursue alternative funding resources for park acquisition, development, and capital improvements, and for recreational programs and special events.
 - Aggressively pursue both public and private grant opportunities.

Some success has been achieved in the area of grant procurement since the prior LPPRP. The largest fiscal impact came in the form of a number of substantial State of Maryland grants approved as part of the State's annual legislative sessions. Chief among these was a \$3 million matching State grant for site rehabilitation and enhancements at Robert E. Lee Park, for which Baltimore County gained responsibility through a 2009 long-term agreement with the City of Baltimore. This grant money, combined with County funding, allowed Baltimore County to replace the deteriorated and unsafe pedestrian bridge that serves as the primary access to the park's main use area, construct a formal parking area, create a dog park on the point of the park's peninsula, re-route and restore certain trails and paths, correct substantial erosion problems, construct a boardwalk to provide pedestrian access from the nearby light rail station, and complete other associated work. An additional opportunity to secure an alternative funding source for parks and recreational facilities in southeast Baltimore County may be upcoming, through the "Harbor Team" project that is associated with dredging of the Baltimore Harbor and its associated shipping lanes.

- Solicit businesses and citizens for donations, enabling them to contribute to the quality of life in the jurisdiction in which they live and do business. Expand the scope of existing sponsorship programs.

Private donations have contributed to several projects in recent years, including \$52,000 raised by local citizens for the playground at Sweet Air Park and \$200,000 contributed by the Lutherville-Timonium Recreation Council towards the construction of a synthetic turf field at Seminary Park. A much larger-scale donation came in the form of the no-cost transfer of the 111-acre former Gunpowder Falls Golf Course from the quasi-public Baltimore County Revenue Authority to DRP, allowing the site to be transformed from a financially struggling public golf course to a public park. Finally, Baltimore County continues to work with a group of citizens that propose the construction of a memorial trail at Marshy Point Park and Nature Center.



The inspirational "Our Children's Playground" at Sweet Air Park was partially funded by \$52,000 in private donations. The butterflies are a symbolic gesture dedicated to the memory of children who passed at an early age, with the playground serving as a legacy that may be enjoyed by children and families for generations to come.

- Enter into appropriate manage-lease agreements to provide citizens with recreational opportunities that are outside the scope of what may feasibly be offered by the County.

Three significant manage-lease agreements have been initiated in recent years, providing facilities that DRP is not in a position to administer. Two indoor swimming pools – one at the newly constructed Randallstown Community Center and the other at the rehabilitated Dundalk Center – have been opened for public use, under the management of the YMCA. The Reisterstown Sportsplex at Reisterstown Regional Park was jointly constructed by DRP and the Baltimore County Revenue Authority, providing an indoor sports field operated by DRP and an indoor ice rink administered by the Revenue Authority. These agreements help to provide diversified public recreational opportunities to the citizens without significant impacts upon Recreation and Parks' funding resources.

- Evaluate and make adjustments to existing fee structures where appropriate.

Various fee structures have been modified since the time of the prior LPPRP, including those associated with DRP's revenue producing facilities (the beaches and Loch Raven Fishing Center), and those for the rental of ball fields by groups not affiliated with the recreation and parks councils (e.g., private sports camps). While most fees have increased to help offset increased operational costs, the County modified the entry fee structure for its beaches in 2011 to allow children of ages eleven and under to enter for free, supporting efforts to provide local citizens with free or low-cost leisure opportunities at a time when many are facing financial struggles.

- Utilize the local open space waiver fund for the acquisition of additional local parks and for the construction of recreational facilities.

Approximately \$1.1 million in open space waiver (fee-in-lieu) funding has been invested within eight separate projects since the last LPPRP. Projects ranged from playground construction and renovations, to the construction of a skate park (Hannah More Park), to the construction of a memorial plaza at Fort Howard Veterans Park. The waiver fees have also been utilized as a funding source for grants to the non-profit NeighborSpace of Baltimore organization, which acquires properties to serve as open space and passive parks in communities within the urban section of the URDL. Approximately \$680,000 in waiver funding has been allocated to NeighborSpace since the start of fiscal year 2006.

- Procure surplus State lands that are of recreation, parks or open space benefit.

While a number of surplus properties owned by the State have been explored in the recent past, none have been acquired. However, the County is presently working with the Maryland Environment Trust (MET) to accommodate the transfer of an ~18-acre property MET owns adjacent to Robert E. Lee Park. Robert E. Lee Park itself is owned by the City of Baltimore, but is now operated and administered by Baltimore County Recreation and Parks via a long-term license agreement with the City.

6. Promote a greater appreciation for the natural environment through interpretation and hands-on experiences, and expand efforts to protect sensitive environmental areas within the County's parklands.

- Perform assessments of existing and future park sites to delineate sensitive environmental areas and to identify appropriate protective measures.

The natural features of properties that are being considered for acquisition are considered as part of the parkland acquisition process, and since the time of the last LPPRP a procedural decision has been made to conduct professional environmental assessments on all properties being considered for acquisition via purchase or donation. Thorough analysis of environmental considerations such as forest buffers, flood plains, steep slopes and critical areas likewise takes place within the design phase of park construction and enhancement projects. In some cases sensitive areas are restored and/or protected through the planting of natural vegetation or establishment of “no-mow” areas, particularly within critical areas or near streams. Such measures help to sustain water quality and likewise contribute a “greening” effect to parks. DRP regularly works Baltimore County EPS and groups such as conservation organizations and the County’s Forestry Board to initiate tree planting projects at parks and other recreation sites including school-recreation centers.

- Promote environmental awareness through the use of interpretive signage and educational programs at both the County’s interpretive centers and general park sites.

An important aspect of Baltimore County’s environmental sustainability efforts is the education of the public to garner a greater appreciation for the natural environment. Environmental education now takes place in all of the County’s public schools, but parks – and in particular the County’s parks with interpretive centers – offer excellent opportunities to experience and learn about nature in a hands-on, in-person manner. The previously described improvements to Marshy Point Park and Nature Center (a site recognized within the multi-state Chesapeake Bay Gateways program) have enhanced the site’s ability to serve as a key venue for learning about the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal ecosystem. Site improvements continue to be made at Cromwell Valley Park, including renovations to the Merrick House to allow the building to host public programs, most of which are nature-focused.

A less-known form of environmental interpretation is a main emphasis of the recently acquired and newly developed Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park, situated at the eastern edge of the Worthington Valley, gateway to the County’s traditional “horse country” and near the edge of the URDL where the urban part of the County transitions into the rural area. The center and farm park offer an expanding scope of learning opportunities for farmers and prospective farmers, including education on sustainable, environment-friendly farming practices. The general public can learn about the importance of farming, and bring home information that they can apply in their own yards and gardens, while at the same time enjoying the farm and nature-focused recreational opportunities afforded by a day in the country.

- Work with DEPRM on such projects as stream restoration, floodplain reforestation, and forest health assessments.

DRP and Baltimore County’s Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (formerly DEPRM) continue to work together on a wide range of projects at parks and recreation sites countywide. Projects that are either underway or have been completed since the prior LPPRP include: stream restoration projects at Cromwell

Valley Park (Minebank Run), the Fields at Renaissance Park (Hopkins Creek), Catonsville Community Park (unnamed stream), public parkland along the Gwynns Falls, St. Patrick's Field leased site (Redhouse Creek) and Overlook Park (Herring Run); shoreline restoration projects at Carrollwood Park and Battle Grove Park (EPS also worked with the State of Maryland on another important shoreline restoration project at Pleasure Island, part of Hart Miller Island State Park); and forest health assessments and projects at Oregon Ridge Park, Cromwell Valley Park, Oregon Ridge Park, Villa Nova Park, and various public lands on the Back River peninsula including Rocky Point and Pottery Farm Parks.

7. Enhance park and facility accessibility and provide quality recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

- Retrofit existing facilities to make the County's parks as universally accessible as possible. Place particular emphasis upon efforts to provide access from parking areas and park entry points to site amenities.

The vast majority of accessibility enhancements are now tied in with larger overall park and facility renovation and improvement projects. Accessibility is assessed as a key factor in any new project, with the most common associated work being the renovation and expansion of sidewalks and paths to provide access to site amenities. An example of this common type of project is the Hannah More Park field renovations project, within which new paths with appropriate grades were constructed to provide access from the parking area to the fields. An example of a project completed for the sole purpose of enhancing access is the recent construction of an accessible ramp at Riderwood Hills Park to provide access to that park's recreational facilities.

- Evaluate and revise design standards to ensure that new facilities are sufficiently accessible and meet Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines (ADAG).

The requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act are fully considered as part of the design project for all capital projects.

- Provide specially designed adaptive facilities similar to the existing wheelchair softball diamond at Rockdale Park, "super-accessible" playgrounds and accessible community gardens.

No such facilities have been developed since the prior LPPRP, though various renovations and site improvements (including some funded through County grant funding) have taken place on a portion of Cromwell Valley Park at which the Therapeutic Alternatives of Maryland (TALMAR) gardens and horticulture therapy center operates. The non-profit TALMAR serves individuals of all ages, with a focus upon those with special needs and disabilities.

8. Expand opportunities for citizens to participate in and experience arts programs and events, as well as historically and culturally significant sites.

- Rehabilitate and upgrade the County's arts facilities.

Since the time of the prior LPPRP the County has completed a major upgrade of the restroom facilities at Lurman Woodland Theater (on the grounds of Catonsville High

School Recreation Center) and made additional improvements including path repairs and extension at Holt Park and Center for the Arts.

- Provide additional strategically sited venues for the arts throughout the County.

New performing arts theaters/auditoriums were included as part of the construction of the Randallstown Community Center and Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center, and the new Watersedge Community Center's activity room was designed and constructed to better serve the large dance programs of the local recreation council. In most cases such facilities are designed to be multi-purpose in nature, and may be used for both the arts and other recreational activities. Such use supports state and local goals of maximizing investment to meet multiple public needs.

- Provide arts and cultural programs and special events at local, regional and countywide levels.

The County continues to achieve this objective, with activities, programs and events ranging from local arts programs offered by the recreation and parks councils, to regional festivals and events such as ethnic festivals and concert series at venues such as Lurman Woodland Theater and Dundalk Heritage Park, to larger events such as the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra concerts at Oregon Ridge Park, which draw concert-goers from throughout the County and beyond.

- Work with Baltimore County Public Schools to maximize the use of school-based arts facilities such as auditoriums.

The auditoriums and other indoor facilities at school-recreation centers continue to provide conveniently situated venues for local arts programs ranging from crafts, to introduction to art, to dance. This allows the public, and in particular children, nearby opportunities to participate in the arts.

- Help protect sites of cultural and historical significance, and provide applicable interpretive facilities, displays and programs.

The County continues to invest substantial resources into the preservation and protection of sites and structures that have historical and/or cultural significance. Some examples from recent years include the previously mentioned renovations to the Merrick House at Cromwell Valley Park, the jointly funded (State and County) rehabilitation projects at the Todd House on the North Point Peninsula, the construction of a period-style cabin on the area where Banneker Homestead is being partially replicated at Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum, and renovations and enhancements to the Perry Hall Mansion, a structure that dates to the 1770's and which was acquired by the County in 2002. Other current efforts involve sites associated with the War of 1812 and the 1814 Battle of North Point.

9. Evaluate facility design standards and specifications and make modifications as necessary to better meet recreational demands, enhance facility safety and functionality, and to ensure that parks and facilities are attractive community enhancements.

- Investigate and implement methods for rectifying problems with the devegetation of athletic fields.

Heavy use of natural surface (turf/grass) fields continues to lead to problems such as devegetation and associated soil runoff. One major program that has been implemented since the time of the prior LPPRP is the County's effort to provide synthetic turf fields that are strategically situated at parks, school-recreation centers and community colleges. To date thirteen synthetic turf fields have been constructed, at a cost of over \$11.5 million. Modern synthetic turf fields offer a number of significant benefits, including: much longer longevity prior to requiring major renovations, a more consistent playing surface that studies have shown reduce the occurrence of severe injuries, and better management of rainfall that results in the fields remaining available for play just after and even during periods of rainy weather.

- Perform regular evaluations of facility specifications and make any necessary modifications.

The County is ever mindful of the need to consider and, if necessary, revise facility specifications. Many lighting renovations projects have taken place in recent years to bring the County's field lighting system up to modern illumination standards, while also enhancing system energy efficiency. Additionally, the County works with playground manufacturers and vendors to remain aware of updated playground safety standards, which help to ensure that playground and tot lot equipment is as safe as is feasible. Finally, the majority of sizeable new County buildings are being designed and constructed to meet the environmental sustainability standards known as LEED (Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design).

- Revisit the design of recreation and community centers and make modifications to respond to staff concerns and to enable these facilities to be more functional for recreation and community purposes.

Baltimore County has, in recent years, implemented a wider variety of community center designs, employing a function-based process for designing and constructing facilities based on need and function. In cases such as the 58,000-square foot Randallstown Community Center and the 28,000+ square foot Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center the structure size is much larger than the base standard 9,000-s.f. community center, with space provided for such facilities as swimming pools, libraries, auditoriums, and/or tech labs. In the case of the 24,000-square foot Jacksonville Community Center the building serves as a multi-agency/function facility with both a recreation center and senior center. The functionality of the County's centers is greatly enhanced by placing more emphasis upon proposed and needed uses.

- Design parks and facilities to be compatible with and visually benefit the surrounding community, and to encourage recreational use.

The surroundings of park sites are an important consideration to the County during the park design phase. Every effort is made to construct or renovate a park in a manner that is suitable and complementary to the park's surroundings, whether a densely developed community or a historically significant environment. Two prime examples are the Wilson Point Park construction project and the Robert E. Lee Park renovations and enhancements project. In the case of Wilson Point, the park design reflected the heritage of the eastern Baltimore County area and greater Middle River in general as an important aircraft manufacturing hub during and after the time of World War II. Design

elements that pay homage to that heritage were implemented when the park was developed. Robert E. Lee Park's rehabilitation and enhancement project, which continues as of the writing of this plan, has been sensitive to the park's situation within the federally designated Lake Roland Historic District. Project coordination involved communications with the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), with particular attention given to rehabilitating the entry bridge's abutments in a manner conducive to their status as historically significant structures. Other site enhancements such as fencing were done in a manner that blends well with the park's historical and naturalistic setting.



Simple design elements such as the use of black fencing, railings and bollards help the recent renovations and improvements at Robert E. Lee Park blend with the historical and natural elements of the park.

10. Allocate sufficient resources to guarantee that parklands and recreational facilities are managed and maintained in a quality manner, and to allow for a high standard of public services.

- As the park system continues to grow, and more sites and recreational facilities are established, provide sufficient staffing to ensure that the County's parks and facilities are well managed, programmed and maintained.

Shifting park maintenance and management services, such as grass mowing and tree maintenance, to contractual services has enabled required park maintenance to occur while monitoring overall operating expenses during difficult economic conditions. Some limited and strategic changes have been made in the area of recreation services structure to provide additional staff support and resources in communities that have larger populations and/or a greater number of facilities coupled with strong program participation. Additional staffing has been added where most needed to administer new parks and facilities including the Reisterstown Sportsplex, Randallstown Community Center, Northeast Regional Recreation Center, and Robert E. Lee Park. At the upper

administrative level, structural changes have likewise taken place, largely in the form of the transfer of certain functions (local open space and greenways review within the development process, capital project coordination and management, and - most recently - park maintenance) to other agencies as part of the County's efforts to consolidate functions and reduce operating costs.

- Provide staff with sufficient resources with which to carry out their duties. Recreation program staff must be provided adequate office equipment, while maintenance staff must be allocated appropriate quantities and types of maintenance equipment.

Since the time of the last LPPRP there have been concerted efforts made to provide staff with the tools required to best perform their duties. This has particularly been the case with information technology and communications equipments, as more and better resources have been provided to staff to help the agency to better respond to changing public demands and communications preferences/trends. Specialized equipment such as motorized carts have been provided at some larger parks that have permanent staff, for purposes ranging from security to maintenance and program support.

- Keep abreast of, and participate in, national and statewide initiatives that are targeted towards keeping parks clean and safe, and which promote the wellbeing of park visitors and recreation program participants. A recent example is DRP's creation of a graffiti eradication team (GET) to quickly remove graffiti, especially in cases where it is offensive and/or gang-related.

DRP continues to monitor national and state trends in parks and recreation in an effort to better serve its constituency and manage its parks and facilities. Staff participation in the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Parks and Recreation Affiliate, and in the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) offer two platforms that often provide valuable insights. Such participation has provided numerous benefits in the recent past, such as the utilization of another county's (Harford County) model to comply with new State regulations pertaining to concussion awareness, and garnering the assistance of fellow parks and recreation agencies (New York City, Maryland DNR, Frederick County, Anne Arundel County) to develop Baltimore County's first ranger program, at Robert E. Lee Park.

11. Participate in various partnerships to maximize resources and efforts for the benefit of Baltimore County citizens.

- Partner with the volunteer-based recreation and parks councils to provide quality recreational opportunities.

The recreation and parks councils continue to be an essential element of the delivery of recreation services to the citizens of Baltimore County. In FY'11 alone over 1.5 million hours of volunteer service was provided through the councils. Additionally, the councils actively raise funds that help keep registration costs low and affordable, and in FY'11 contributed more than \$2.76 million to help pay the field leaders and building attendants that oversee parks and recreation sites during programs, activities and events. As economic conditions have impacted the County's available fiscal resources for parks and recreation, the councils have largely exerted extra effort and expended more of their resources to help fill the void. Another invaluable contribution that some councils bring

is their ability and willingness to assist with the funding of capital improvements or renovations, an example being the Lutherville-Timonium Recreation Council's contribution of \$200,000 towards the cost of the Seminary Park synthetic turf field. The councils, in particular those associated with interpretive centers and facilities, also serve as a platform through which groups and individuals such as Boy and Girl Scouts donate their services to work on park improvement projects.

- Utilize the Board of Recreation and Parks as an integral link between the citizens of Baltimore County, the recreation and parks councils, the County Council, and DRP.

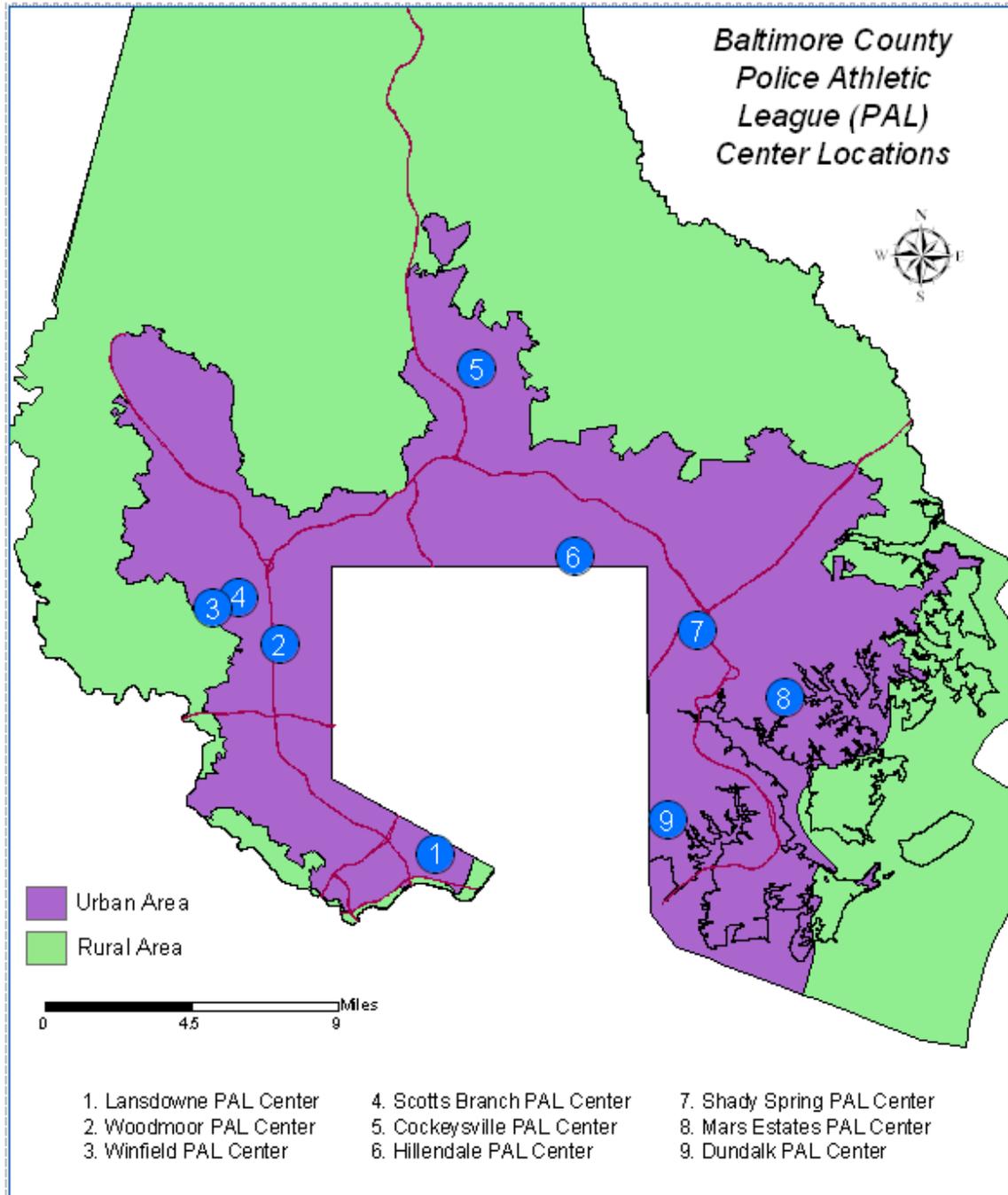
The Baltimore County Board of Recreation and Parks continues to serve as an important medium for the citizens and councils to voice their thoughts and concerns, and which DRP consults for a wide range of issues.

- Work with Baltimore County Public Schools to enhance the effectiveness of the joint-use agreement for school recreation centers and to resolve use conflicts. Establish an “oversight committee” to oversee and administer the joint-use agreement.

Efforts continue to be exerted to make the joint-use agreement and the shared function of school-recreation centers as seamless as possible. Close coordination takes place between DRP and Baltimore County Public Schools at multiple levels to seek to avoid and resolve any use disputes or problems that may arise. Since the adoption of the prior LPPRP a special facility-specific joint-use agreement has been formulated to better administer the use of stadium facilities (including synthetic turf fields) at high school recreation centers. To date the proposed oversight committee that was recommended has not been formed.

- Work with other Baltimore County agencies such as the Office of Community Conservation, the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability, the Department of Planning, and the Police to combine resources and meet public needs. The Police Athletic League (PAL) program is a particularly important effort, providing recreational opportunities that complement the traditional programs of local recreation councils.

There are many success stories that have resulted from cooperative inter-agency efforts. Several new parks and recreation sites, including Wilson Point Park, The Fields at Renaissance Park, Randallstown Community Center and the Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center are the product of joint efforts by Community Conservation (now incorporated into the County Department of Planning) and DRP. As mentioned previously, DRP works with the County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability to facilitate a wide range of projects that help to sustain and enhance the environment. Finally, chief responsibility for the management of the County's PAL Centers has returned to DRP since the time of the former LPPRP, with the agency working hand-in-hand with the Police Department to offer both recreation and guidance to youths between the ages of 8 and 17. The map on the following page displays the PAL Center locations, all of which are situated within the urban portion of the County's URDL.



- Participate in cooperative efforts with the State of Maryland, neighboring jurisdictions, and other recreation and parks agencies throughout the State.

A number of noteworthy multi-jurisdictional projects have taken place within the past five years. These include the previously described BeeTree Preserve conservation and public recreation access easement (joint County – DNR project), Robert E. Lee Park license agreement (no cost agreement with Baltimore City), and jointly-funded (County, State, federal government) acquisition of the site of the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park. Two other agreements that would transfer park property to

the County are presently underway—one involving State land and the other City property. Additionally, Baltimore County has been working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service and other local jurisdictions on cooperative efforts to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812. Finally, numerous other park sites continue to be operated by the County through leases and similar agreements with the State of Maryland (Kingsville Park, a portion of Cromwell Valley Park, and a portion of Wilson Point Park) and Baltimore City (Loch Raven Fishing Center and Prospect Park).



The Loch Raven Fishing Center, situated on Loch Raven Reservoir, is operated by Baltimore County under a lease agreement with the reservoir's owner, the City of Baltimore.

- Work and collaborate with non-profit, civic and community organizations, especially in cases where such organizations are in a position to support and supplement the County's missions. Explore additional opportunities for groups and citizens to provide volunteer services.

The County works hand-in-hand with multiple non-profit and civic organizations on mutual aims that benefit the citizens of Baltimore County. The non-profit group NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, partially funded by the County, helps in the "greening" of urbanized, developed communities by acquiring properties for public use and/or general conservation. Groups such as the Gunpowder Falls Conservancy conduct County-sanctioned tree planting projects at parks, open spaces and greenways, helping to promote environmental health. Numerous community and civic groups conduct both sanctioned and informal park cleanups as part of their efforts to keep their communities and parks clean and attractive.

12. Expand the use of technology to enhance agency operations, and to better meet the needs of the public.

- Seek further opportunities for using the Internet to better serve County citizens, and to make the public aware of recreational opportunities and the park system.

Efforts have been made to expand DRP's presence on the Internet, particularly in the area of recreation program information. A program search function has been created to allow the public to look up types of programs and activities, learn of the communities where the program types are offered, and often link to other County or recreation and parks council web pages where more detailed program information is presented. There have also been discussions with the County's Office of Information Technology pertaining to prospective addition of comprehensive park and recreational facility data to the County's "My Neighborhood" web application, which the public may visit to bring up maps of various public facilities.

- Utilize technological resources to streamline and improve upon various agency operations. Procure additional electronic resources that would enhance operations and allow the agency to better serve the public.

Some key actions that have taken place since the prior LPPRP include the enhancement of information technology resources (both hardware and communications/data connections) at DRP's remote offices, the establishment of technology labs with public computer access at a number of community centers, and the installation of modern security and surveillance systems at certain sites to better protect the public's investment in recreational facilities. In recent years DRP has used geographic positioning system (GPS) technology to better map park trails and for other operational purposes. The implementation and expansion of a computerized maintenance management software system has likewise helped to better facilitate the submission and flow of park maintenance requests.

Updated County Goals and Objectives for Recreation, Parks and Open Space

Baltimore County's goals and objectives pertaining specifically to recreation, parks and open space were revised within the County's Master Plan 2020, starting on page 124 of that plan. Following are the updated goals and objectives from MP2020, which were presented as "policies" and associated "actions" within that document:

1. Policy: Acquire a variety of parklands and recreation sites to achieve parkland acquisition goals and meet public recreation needs.

Associated actions:

- Utilize Program Open Space (POS) as a key funding source for the acquisition of parkland.
- Strategically target all available parkland funding resources to areas of existing and projected future needs, whether these needs be acreage-based, facility-based, resource-based, or policy-based. Specific focus will need to be applied to the County's proposed Community Enhancement Areas (CEAs), where population growth will be concentrated.

Parklands and facilities needed for the CEA should be provided within and/or in close proximity to their bounds when possible to promote walkability and sustainability.

- Employ the Baltimore County development process to provide quality local open space, obtain fees-in-lieu where appropriate (to help fund park acquisition and development), and to secure vital greenway connections. Continue to refine the open space dedication process to ensure that local open spaces are deeded to the County, homeowners' association, or other appropriate party in a timely and accurate manner.
 - Reinvestigate and update, as needed, the County's policies and regulations pertaining to Greenways. Continue to require the dedication of Greenways within the County development process and employ these lands to create trail and path networks such as those underway in and around the Owings Mills Growth Area. The Department of Recreation and Parks should work with the Department of Planning and other county agencies to add community plan recommended greenways and other appropriate linear land areas to the Greenway Map, which identifies land areas that must be preserved by dedication or easement.
 - Exercise all means necessary for the acquisition of key prospective park sites, up to and including the powers of master plan conflict and eminent domain.
 - Work with landowners to secure tax credits and similar agreements that will enable them to donate or sell their land at a reduced value to the County or local established land trust if such properties would be of sufficient public recreational or open space benefit.
 - Continue support of the Neighborspace Program as a proven mechanism for preserving smaller neighborhood-oriented open spaces.
2. Policy: Provide a diversity of recreational facilities and areas to meet the needs of citizens, and to serve the organized programs of the local recreation and parks councils.

Associated Actions:

- Provide a sufficient quantity of traditional outdoor recreation facilities such as ball diamonds, athletic fields, sports courts, playgrounds, and picnic areas.
 - Provide sufficient indoor facilities and access time to meet expanding demands for year-round recreation, to serve programs that require indoor space, and to facilitate use by community and civic organizations.
 - Construct additional trails and paths to meet growing demands for linear-based forms of recreation such as walking, jogging, and bicycling. Work with County and State agencies to establish pedestrian and bicycle connections between parks, residential areas and other points of interest, in conjunction with the county's pedestrian and bicycle plans and community plans. Community Enhancement Area standards and plans should include strong pedestrian and bicycle access components so as to encourage non-motorized forms of transportation and provide associated recreational opportunities.
 - Provide appropriate service amenities such as restrooms, storage areas, parking areas, sidewalks and paths, and facility/security lighting.
3. Policy: Renovate and rehabilitate parks to address the issues of facility aging and outdated recreational infrastructure.

Associated Actions:

- Evaluate the functionality and condition of the County’s older parks, and conduct appropriate site redesign, rehabilitation, and improvement projects.
 - Where appropriate continue comprehensive capital renovation programs, including existing programs for playground equipment, courts, fields, facility lighting, and parking lots; seek opportunities for the expansion of such programs to other types of recreational facilities and support amenities.
 - Explore opportunities for reutilizing or retrofitting facilities for other recreational purposes if they are no longer needed or desired.
4. Policy: Participate and play a vital role within community revitalization programs such as the County’s renaissance initiative.

Associated Actions:

- Provide quality parks and recreational facilities within community revitalization areas and renaissance communities. Where appropriate, replace unsuitable or poorly functioning land uses with parks that will help to enhance the community. *Note: The “renaissance” initiative has been replaced by the designation of Community Enhancement Areas (see last bullet under this policy, as well as definition on page 7).*
- Actively participate in community redesign processes, recognizing the important role that parks play in providing and maintaining attractive, healthy neighborhoods.
- Maintain parks in older communities to ensure that these sites remain attractive and functional, and contribute to the strength of the community.
- Continue to require the provision of appropriate and adequate open space opportunities within or in proximity to the County’s proposed Community Enhancement Areas. Evaluate the required local open space requirements to ensure that these remain adequate.

5. Policy: Expand waterfront access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Associated Actions:

- Provide an assortment of recreational facilities at the County’s waterfront parks, ranging from water specific facilities such as boat ramps and fishing piers, to general amenities including picnic pavilions, playgrounds and paths.
- Utilize Marshy Point Park and Nature Center on Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks as a key platform for providing citizens of the region with opportunities to experience, learn about and gain an appreciation for the Chesapeake Bay and its ecosystem.
- Evaluate all existing waterfront park sites to assure adequate use, while undertaking appropriate environmental conservation measures.
- Participate in the National Park Service-led Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail initiative, employing the trail as a tool for increasing tourism and park visitation.
- Designate viable water trails to connect waterfront parks and provide opportunities for canoeing and kayaking. Seek to establish an interpretive water trail on the North Point Peninsula as part of the county, state and federal efforts to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the Battle of North Point (1814).

6. Policy: Pursue alternative funding sources for park acquisition, development, capital improvements, recreational programs and special events.

Associated Actions:

- Aggressively pursue both public and private grant opportunities.
- Solicit businesses and citizens for donations and expand the scope of existing sponsorship programs.
- Enter into appropriate manage-lease and similar agreements to provide citizens with recreational opportunities that are outside the scope of what may feasibly be offered by the County.
- Procure surplus State lands that are of recreation, parks, or open space benefit when these become available.

7. Policy: Promote a greater appreciation for the natural environment through interpretation and hands-on experiences, and expand efforts to protect sensitive environmental areas within the County's parklands.

Associated Actions:

- Perform assessments of existing and future park sites to delineate sensitive environmental areas and to identify appropriate protective measures.
- Promote environmental awareness through the use of interpretive signage and educational programs at both the County's interpretive centers and general park sites.
- Work with DEPRM on such projects as stream and shoreline restoration, floodplain, reforestation, wildlife management, and forest health assessments. *Note: The agency name has changed from DEPRM to Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS).*
- Collaborate with County agencies and other partners to improve green design standards and enhance sustainability for recreation facilities.

8. Policy: Enhance park and facility accessibility and provide quality recreational opportunities for individuals of all abilities.

Associated Actions:

- Continue to provide access from parking areas and park entry points to site amenities.
- Ensure that new facilities are sufficiently accessible and meet Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines (ADAG).

9. Policy: Expand opportunities for citizens to participate in and experience arts programs and events, and historically and culturally significant sites.

Associated Actions:

- Provide arts and cultural programs at local, regional and countywide levels.
- Work with Baltimore County Public Schools to maximize the use of school-based arts facilities.
- Help protect sites of cultural and historical significance, and provide applicable interpretive facilities, displays and programs.

- Participate in special initiatives such as the historical trail efforts that are underway in preparation for the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 and the Battle of North Point.

10. Policy: Evaluate facility design standards as necessary to better meet recreational demands, enhance facility safety and functionality, and ensure that parks and facilities are sustainable, attractive community enhancements.

Associated Actions:

- Continue to investigate and implement methods for rectifying problems with the de-vegetation of athletic fields, whether through the replacement with synthetic field surfaces or other means.



Synthetic turf fields are an example of a modern, emerging technology that has been implemented to enhance functionality and reduce maintenance. Such fields, unlike traditional grass fields, may be used soon after or even during rainy weather. The fields manage water flow very well, and are not prone to such problems as de-vegetation and compaction, which often leads to sediment runoff and erosion at traditional grass and dirt fields.

- Perform regular evaluations of facility specifications and make any necessary updates or modifications.
- Revisit the design of recreation and community centers and make modifications, where necessary, to enhance functionality, maximize recreational and community use, and meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards.
- Design parks and facilities to be compatible with and visually benefit the surrounding community.
- Revise park design practices to meet current environmental regulations, including the new State requirements related to stormwater management.

11. Policy: Participate in various partnerships to maximize resources and efforts for the benefit of Baltimore County citizens.

Associated Actions:

- Partner with the volunteer-based recreation and parks councils to provide quality recreational opportunities.
- Utilize the Board of Recreation and Parks as an integral link between the citizens of Baltimore County, the recreation and parks councils, the County Council, and Department of Recreation and Parks.
- Work with Baltimore County Public Schools to maximize the effectiveness of the joint-use agreement for school recreation centers.
- Work with other Baltimore County agencies such as the Office of Community Conservation, the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability, the Department of Planning, and the Police to combine resources and meet public needs. The Police Athletic League (PAL) program is a particularly important effort, providing recreational opportunities that complement the traditional programs of local recreation councils while providing invaluable mentoring experiences to participating youths. *Note: The Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability has been renamed the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS), and the Office of Community Conservation now operates as a function of the County's Department of Planning.*
- Participate in cooperative efforts with the State of Maryland, neighboring jurisdictions, and other recreation and parks agencies throughout the State and country.
- Work and collaborate with non-profit, civic and community organizations, especially in cases where such organizations are in a position to support and supplement the County's missions. Explore additional opportunities for groups and citizens to provide volunteer services.

12. Policy: Expand the use of technology to enhance agency operations, and to better meet the needs of the public.

Associated Actions:

- Seek further opportunities for using the Internet to better serve County citizens and to make the public aware of recreational opportunities and the park system.
- Utilize technological resources to streamline and improve upon various agency operations. Procure modern technological resources that would enhance operations and allow the agency to better serve the public with sustainable technologies.

Master Plan 2020 attests to the dynamic nature of parks and recreation, and its impacts upon other County goals, objectives, policies and priorities. In addition to the above policies and actions, the plan included many recreation and parks related policies and actions in other sections of the Plan. Following is a summary of the additional parks, recreation and associated MP2020 content, referenced by plan section and page:

- Continue to provide high quality waterfront parks and related programs that accommodate a variety of recreational and leisure activities, while concurrently working to protect the Bay and its tidal ecosystem. The waterways should be made more accessible and the use of waterfront parks encouraged wherever appropriate within the framework of good environmental stewardship. (The Waterfront – Recreation and Parks, page 90)
- Create walkable communities with physical and visual access to the waterfront for public enjoyment. (The Waterfront – Waterfront Access, page 89)
- Increase visibility and access to visitor destinations in Baltimore County. (Tourism, page 141)
- Enhance existing visitor destinations in Baltimore County. (Tourism, page 142)
- Improve and expand the visitor experience in Baltimore County. (Tourism, page 142)
- Continue to promote recreational amenities and activities within the Owings Mills Growth Area. (Owings Mills Growth Area – Recreation and Parks, page 68)
- Promote walkable communities and neighborhood connectivity. (Owings Mills Growth Area, page 67)
- Preserve valuable cultural, historic, recreational, and environmental resources by limiting development and acquiring available land for public benefit. (Rural Communities – Resource Preservation Areas, page 91)



The ~250-acre BeeTree Preserve, adjacent to the Torrey C. Brown (formerly North Central) Rail Trail in northern Baltimore County, was preserved through the purchase of a State-funded conservation and public recreation access easement, whereby the public may use the site for suitable recreational activities while all management and maintenance responsibilities are retained by the landowners

- Promote outdoor physical activity in all regions of the County, in collaboration with appropriate County agencies. (Public Safety and Health – Physical Activity, page 118)
- Continue to implement a recreational hygiene program through a better understanding of environmental factors. (Public Safety and Health – Recreational Hygiene, Page 120)

- Expand pedestrian and bicycle policies and facilities to meet the needs of current and future residents, enhance safety, improve access to transit, and support community revitalization. (Transportation, page 55)
- The infrastructure projects in the Capital Budget and Program should be used to maintain existing healthy communities, and leverage county resources to direct future mixed-use growth to the Community Enhancement Areas. (Public Infrastructure, page 46)
- Complete a transportation analysis to review the existing and proposed road network, mass transit options, pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. (Middle River Redevelopment Area – Transportation, page 80)
- Preserve historic structures and their settings. (Historic and Cultural Resources, page 95)
- Encourage community activities using public school buildings. (Public Education, page 106)
- Use resources effectively and efficiently for renovation, addition, or construction. (Public Education, page 106)
- Continue to implement water quality improvement measures in and along the waterfront, and continue to enforce water quality, forest, and habitat protection components of the State-mandated Critical Area law. (The Chesapeake Bay, Waterways, and Waterfront Areas, page 165)
- Continue to assure the sustainable management of public and private forest resources to provide ecosystem services and meet human needs. (Land Resources, page 172)
- Implement biological diversity protection measures for the County’s diverse habitats and their dependent wildlife and the ecological processes that ensure healthy, productive, and sustainable ecosystems. Restore lost or degraded ecosystem functions, and foster environmental stewardship. (Biological Diversity and Sensitive Areas, page 175)
- Implement the goals of Master Plan 2020 to create compact, sustainable, socially attractive, vibrant, walkable, mixed-use communities. (Implementation, page 181)

PROGRAMS, PROCEDURES AND MECHANISMS

Baltimore County and DRP utilize an array of programs, procedures and mechanisms to help achieve its goals and objectives and further its policies. These include capital programming and funding strategies, County codes and regulations, in-house procedures, and agreements and partnerships with recreation councils, other governmental agencies (both within and outside of Baltimore County) and other parties. All of these tools are necessary to achieve the County’s recreation, parks and open space goals, and to deliver a high quality recreation and parks system in a cost and resource-effective manner. The following outlines the key programs, procedures and mechanisms currently in place. The bulleted goals listed in the “Recreation, Parks and Open Space Goals” will be achieved through the successful implementation and enhancement of these mechanisms, and by the establishment of other needed programs, procedures and mechanisms.

Parkland Acquisition: Baltimore County has traditionally adhered to the long-standing State of Maryland-prescribed goal of providing 30 acres of parkland per thousand citizens (the procedure for calculating the parkland acreage per thousand is described in “Appendix D – Calculation of the Default State Recreational Acreage Goal”). As of the writing of the *2005 Baltimore County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan* the County had approximately 19 acres of parkland per thousand citizens. The calculation of the current parkland per thousand level is presented later in

this chapter. The County employs a variety of mechanisms and strategies to acquire parklands needed to meet the needs of citizens and to try and achieve the State's parkland acreage goal. These include:

- Land Purchases: In order to procure high quality properties suitable for the construction of neighborhood, community, regional, countywide and special parks, funding must be made available for land purchases. The three key funding sources for purchasing parkland are Maryland's Program Open Space (POS), Baltimore County bond dollars and County general funds.
 - a) Program Open Space: POS funding, which derives from State of Maryland real estate transfer tax revenues, is shared between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the counties, including Baltimore City. Unless a county has reached its parkland acreage goal, a minimum of 50% of the county's annual POS funding allocation must be utilized for parkland acquisition, with the remainder available to be spent on park development or rehabilitation. POS funding may be requested for 100% of the appraised value of most parkland purchases.

Because POS funding is based upon the amount of incoming real estate transfer tax revenues, the amount of funding is variable and fluctuates with economic conditions. Transfer tax revenues grew precipitously during the real estate boom, during which home prices and property values were at an all-time high. More recently, however, the annual revenues have dwindled substantially, reflecting the economic difficulties in general and the beleaguered housing market specifically.

State legislation has likewise had significant impacts upon the flow of transfer tax revenues to POS and other land preservation programs. State funding diversions (taking of transfer tax revenue to pay for expenses other than those for which the tax was created) between FY's 2003 and 2006 took approximately \$17.5 million in POS funding from Baltimore County alone. Changes to the transfer tax sharing formula have likewise reduced POS funding to the counties, including legislation enacted in 2007 that transfers the funding burden for the operations of Maryland State Forest and Parks to the local side of POS. This results in the greater of \$21 million per year or 20% of the local-side POS funding being taken from the counties to fund Forest and Parks operations. Based on Baltimore County's typical share of the local POS funding, the County loses approximately \$2.8 million in POS funding per year as a result of this single legislative action. Finally, recent economic difficulties at the State resulted in a legislative decision at the 2010 Maryland Legislature to borrow \$103 million in local POS funding (in cash) statewide and backfill it with bond funding paid back to the counties over a multi-year period. This impacted approximately \$8.1 million in Baltimore County POS funding. While this action had major impacts upon local parks and recreation agencies, counties and municipalities, the provision to pay back borrowed funding represented a much less damaging option than simply diverting/taking the POS funds with no pay back provision.

The actions and situations described above have combined to drastically reduce the amount of POS funding available to the County. Baltimore County's annual allocation of

\$18.1 million in FY'07 was a record high and something of an anomaly, being multiple times higher than the FY'94 – FY'06 allocations of between \$2 million and \$6 million annually. The County's allocation dropped precipitously to only \$836,000 in FY'10, second lowest since the creation of POS to the FY'77 allocation of \$741,000. As of the writing of this plan the pay back of the \$103 million in POS funding borrowed in 2010 has effectively been extended from three years (FY's 11-13) to five years (FY's 11-14), and the FY'12 POS allocation from transfer tax revenues was being split over multiple years rather than coming to the counties in its entirety at the start of the fiscal year.

The amount of POS funding and federally-derived Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – State Assistance funding allocated to DNR has likewise dwindled in recent years, challenging DNR's ability to fund their own acquisitions, as well as local acquisitions for which that agency sometimes provides funding assistance. The continuing economic difficulties will likely prolong the POS funding challenges that have plagued the State, counties and localities over the past several years, thereby limiting the funding available for park acquisition and development.



View of Rolling Mill Farm at the edge of Worthington Valley, prior to the property's acquisition to serve as the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park. Acquisition was funded with both local and state-side POS funding, as well as the most recent LWCF grant for a Baltimore County acquisition project (in 2007).

- b) **County Bond Dollars:** During various election years an assortment of County bond referendums are placed on the ballot, including a borrowing question for parks, preservation and greenways. These questions ask Baltimore County voters to approve the issuance of general obligation bonds to fund County capital projects, generally spent over a two-year budget cycle that begins in even-numbered year. In the case of parks, preservation and greenways, the bond funding is for general recreation and parks capital projects rather than one or more *specific* projects/jobs. There have been 27 such bond referendum questions for parks, preservation and greenways since 1958, ranging from a

low amount of \$500,000 in 1958 to a high of \$10,029,000 in 2000. Each has been approved by the County’s voters with high approval ratings (the 2010 referendum issue for parks, recreation and greenways was the 4th highest of nine County bond issues, garnering an approval rating in excess of 66%). This perfect record for approval attests to the citizens’ strong support for parks and recreation in Baltimore County. The following chart displays the approved parks, recreation and greenways bond funding for the past four two-year budget cycles, as well as the corresponding percentage of the overall County bond funding that was approved.

Fiscal Year	Bond Dollars Approved	% of Total County Bond \$'s
2006	\$5,550,000	2.4%
2008	\$8,320,000	3.3%
2010	\$5,000,000	2.0%
2012	\$5,000,000	1.9%
Total:	\$23,870,000	2.4%

The bond funding dedicated to parks, recreation and greenways ranged from \$5 million to \$5.55 million in three of the four funding cycles. The total amount of \$23.87 million equates to an average of just under \$3 million per year (over eight years from FY’s 2006-2013). The percentage of the overall County bond funding dedicated to parks, recreation and greenways dropped to less than 2% for the funding allocated in the FY’12 capital budget. It is important to note that funding from other bond referendum issues (e.g. general government buildings, community improvements, waterway improvement program) sometimes contributes to parks and recreation projects.

- c) County General Funds: General funds derive from various types of tax revenues brought in by the County. These are the primary source of operating funding, but are also made available for capital projects when tax revenues are sufficient. General funds are sometimes utilized to provide a required match for various types of State and federal funding. The following table displays the total general fund allocations to DRP’s capital budget since fiscal year 2006. The funding is used for park acquisition, development and rehabilitation.

Fiscal Year	General Funds*
2006	\$7,198,000
2007	\$4,390,000
2008	\$4,805,000
2009	\$12,020,000
2010	\$2,250,000
2011	\$0
2012	\$0
Total:	\$30,663,000

*- reflects new general funds only, and does not include general funds reallocated from elsewhere within the County’s capital budget

The unusually high funding amount in FY'09 was targeted to a number of large projects with substantial budgets, including the synthetic turf field initiative and the Northeast Regional, Watersedge and Jacksonville Recreation/Community Centers. The relatively small amount of funding in FY'10, as well as the lack of general funds for fiscal years 2011 and 2012, reflects the difficult financial times that have dominated recent budgets.

- Other Means of Parkland Acquisition: Baltimore County supplements its traditional fee-simple park acquisition program with an assortment of other strategies aimed at providing the citizens with a wide diversity of parklands. These include:
 - a) Local Open Space (LOS): Baltimore County Zoning Regulations describe LOS as “land provided in residential subdivisions as necessary and desirable for the local recreational needs of residents of such subdivisions. It provides for such recreational types of spaces as play lots, local unusual natural scenic beauty, recreational walkways and pathways, and special street center islands. The term local open space parcel shall not include the larger open space park and play field areas of the type which serve larger than local needs and which are incorporated in the Master Plan.” The County Code states that LOS regulations shall “provide for open spaces in order to offer recreational opportunities close to home; to enhance the appearance of neighborhoods through the preservation of natural green spaces; to counteract the effects of urban congestion and monotony; and to encourage participation by all age groups in the use and care of LOS tracts.”

This important program, which is tied to Baltimore County's development process, requires that developers dedicate a mandated amount of open space within residential housing projects in the County. The program functions through terms outlined in the Baltimore County Local Open Space Manual, most recently revised in February of 2000 and amended by County legislation over the years. The LOS program also provides options for the developer-funded construction of recreational facilities on open spaces or local parks, as well as the payment of "fee-in-lieu" of open space under certain circumstances. LOS may be owned by the County, or owned and maintained under home and condominium owners associations.

The development process and Local Open Space Manual also require that greenways reservations or easements be granted to the County for development projects taking place along Master Plan-designated greenways (see Greenways-related recommendations later in this chapter for further details).

- b) Donation: Private landowners sometimes approach the County with offers to donate their property for park purposes. Some individuals who do so are interested in seeing their land preserved in a natural state, and/or used for public recreation, while others may wish to reap a tax benefit for such donations.
- c) Other: There are a few infrequently utilized methods for acquiring additional land to serve as County parkland. One such method is the process of trading properties with another entity such as Maryland DNR. Such transactions may take place in cases where one or both involved entities would enjoy a benefit such as improved constituent services

or the enhancement of site management capabilities. Another means through which additional parkland may be procured is through the acquisition of land that has gone to tax sale as a result of landowners failing to pay property taxes. Such properties are typically acquired at no cost. Finally, the County's previously mentioned partnership with the non-profit organization NeighborSpace of Baltimore County helps to preserve additional green space in urbanized communities.

The County has been hard-pressed in its efforts to have parkland acquisition keep pace with the strong population growth that has taken place over the past several decades (a full parkland acreage needs assessment appears later in this chapter). The volatility of the real estate market has substantial impacts upon parkland acquisition. When the real estate market is strong, more funding is usually available, particularly in the form of POS funding since that program's funding source is the real estate transfer tax. However, a strong market almost always translates into higher land values, so that less land may be had for the money. Conversely, a down real estate market is usually indicative of a struggling economy, resulting in less transfer tax funding (and POS) and overall budget reductions that often limit park acquisition efforts.

Prospective park acquisitions are usually identified in one of two ways: first, by the Department actively seeking out lands capable of meeting a specific need (thereby helping to achieve one or more actions identified in various County plans); or second, by pursuing properties identified by others and brought to the Department's attention. In the first instance, suitable properties within a specific geographic area are identified as potential acquisitions needed to help meet local acreage needs and/or accommodate needed recreational facilities. Parcels adjacent to existing park and open space sites might be pursued to serve as additions to those sites, allowing for facility expansion or for the development of what may have previously been a substandard site. Other parcels might be identified to meet a specific initiative such as providing a regional park. Still other properties might be targeted as projects of joint State-County interest.

The second most common manner in which prospective acquisitions are identified occurs when landowners, real estate brokers, local recreation and parks councils or staff, elected officials, civic associations, or concerned citizens contact the County to report the availability of a given property. This method is less likely to lead to an acquisition than the previously described method, as these sites are often not as conducive to serving as parks as are sites that have been identified, analyzed, and selected in-house.

All prospective acquisitions are thoroughly investigated and analyzed based upon a wide variety of criterion. First and foremost is the relative need for the property, and its ability to help achieve parkland acreage and recreation facility needs. The population to be served is closely considered, be it a relatively small geographic area such as a neighborhood, community or recreation council, or a larger geographic entity such as a recreation region. Often, specific property searches will be conducted to identify prospective sites for acquisition within the area of interest. This process goes hand-in-hand with the State goal of strategically targeting parks and recreation resources to the area to be served. Sites that are conducive to being developed with recreational facilities to help meet recreational demands are usually given higher priority than sites that are not as suitable for development. This is particularly the case when acquisition funding resources are limited. As such, preliminary site assessment takes place with the use of

geographic information systems and other internal resources, and subsequent site visits take place if the property is deemed worthy of further consideration. Other factors that are evaluated when prospective acquisitions are explored include:

- Willingness of the property owner to sell;
- Cost factors—price, physical limitations and other factors that could prove costly if the site were to be developed as a park;
- Site access, both in terms of proximity to population served, and local road and pedestrian network;
- Relationship to other County and State initiatives and plans (e.g., the County’s revitalization program, County and State growth area plans and “smart growth” guidelines, community plans, etc.);
- Potential local conflicts, especially in cases where a site is needed to meet certain recreational needs, and such facilities may not be welcome by neighbors;
- Partnership opportunities, especially with Baltimore County Public Schools (for school recreation center sites) and Maryland DNR;
- Presence of natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas. This can be viewed in both a positive and negative manner. Some sites are pursued to preserve natural resources or provide access to areas such as the waterfront, while other sites may be rejected because of environmental constraints that would limit the County’s ability to construct needed recreational facilities; and
- Special status/attributes of the property, such as cultural or historical significance.

Developing Parks and Recreational Facilities: Baltimore County is dedicated to providing its citizens with diverse recreational opportunities to help meet the leisure time needs of as broad a portion of the population as is feasible. While the County realizes that it cannot satisfy all possible recreational demands, every effort will continue to be made to provide a wealth of recreation options for citizens of all ages and abilities.

DRP is the County agency charged with the primary responsibility of providing public recreational opportunities and venues. Other County agencies including the Department of Aging, the Police Department, and Baltimore County Public Schools complement the agency’s efforts by providing activities and venues for senior citizens; support for programs for youth at Police Athletic League (PAL) Centers; and physical fitness, sports, arts, and other assorted activities within the learning curriculum, scholastic sports, and after-school clubs and programs. Colleges and universities situated within the County provide recreational facilities for their students and alumni, and provide other leisure opportunities at venues such as sports stadiums, theaters and arts galleries. The significant green spaces on college and university lands are also often enjoyed by nearby residents. The Community Colleges of Baltimore County (CCBC) partner with DRP, providing limited, organized use of their swimming pools and select ball fields, including DRP-funded synthetic turf fields at CCBC-Dundalk and CCBC-Essex.

The citizens of Baltimore County are likewise provided many other types of leisure options by both the public and private sector. Maryland DNR owns and operates the Soldiers Delight Natural Environment Area, Patapsco Valley, Gunpowder Falls, North Point, and Hart-Miller

Island State Parks. These are large public land holdings that offer a multitude of recreational opportunities (often natural resource-based) unavailable within most Baltimore County Parks. DNR's holdings offer a vast network of trails suitable for numerous activities including walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling, mountain biking and horseback riding. These trails provide for the majority of citizen demands for many trail-based activities. The large Baltimore City-owned properties in the County—Loch Raven, Prettyboy and Liberty Reservoirs, and Robert E. Lee Park—also have substantial trail networks on which certain recreational activities are permitted. A portion of Loch Raven Reservoir's road network is also closed to motorized traffic and dedicated to public recreation uses on weekends. DNR's sites also provide camping facilities and vast picnic areas, and offer resource-based recreational activities including fishing, boating, windsurfing, swimming, nature interpretation and managed hunting. The City's reservoirs offer other important recreational outlets including fishing, boating (from canoes to electric motor boats) and golf (Pine Ridge Golf Course at Loch Raven Reservoir). DRP leases the Loch Raven Fishing Center at Loch Raven Reservoir from Baltimore City, managing boat rentals, boat launching permits, and other related services.

Important hands-on and traditional educational opportunities are offered at Maryland State Parks and Soldier's Delight, complemented by Baltimore County's natural and historical interpretive centers—Oregon Ridge, Marshy Point, Cromwell Valley, and Benjamin Banneker. These sites allow visitors to learn about nature, helping to develop their understanding of, and appreciation for, the natural environment. Such experiences are all the more essential in Baltimore County, given the County's proximity to the Chesapeake Bay.

An assortment of leisure choices is also made available by quasi-public agencies, non-profit institutions, and the private sector as well. The Baltimore County Revenue Authority operates five public golf courses, as well as the new ice rink at Reisterstown Sportsplex. YMCA's provide affordable recreational opportunities that complement what the County and local recreation councils have to offer. Faith-based institutions and civic organizations such as Boy and Girl Scouts of America, Lions Clubs and American Legions regularly provide leisure activities for both their members and the public. Private entities offer a wide range of facilities for fee-based use, ranging from health and swim clubs, to marinas, to private campgrounds.

All of the recreational opportunities provided by these other agencies, groups and institutions provide important supplements to the parks, facilities and programs furnished by DRP, resulting in the vast majority of public recreation interests being accommodated in one way or another.

- **Key Types of County Parklands:** Baltimore County offers a wide selection of parklands and recreational facilities, ranging from natural grassy and wooded lots smaller than a tenth of an acre, to intensely developed community parks, to parks featuring hundreds of acres of natural areas. These sites and facilities provide recreational opportunities at a variety of scales, some serving only the residential development in which they are situated, and others attracting visitors from across and outside the County. In terms of general classification, parks are distinguished from open spaces by the presence of some form of permanent/structural recreational facility(s), with their full acreage counted towards parkland acreage goals.

- a) **Countywide Parks and Facilities:** This category consists of both the County’s largest parks and other parks with types of facilities or attractions that are considered to have countywide appeal. This would include large parks such as Oregon Ridge (~1,100 acres), Cromwell Valley Park (over 435 acres of combined County and State-owned land), the ~415-acre Robert E. Lee Park, and Rocky Point Park (377.1 acres, including the Rocky Point Golf Course), each of which feature substantial natural/undeveloped areas. Also included would be Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum (126.6 acres) and the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park (~150 acres). The City-owned reservoirs are also considered to be countywide facilities, but are categorized as natural resource/open space lands. Countywide parks and facilities are assumed to have the widest geographic service area, and the acreage of these sites is allocated countywide for the purpose of parkland acreage needs analysis.
- b) **Regional Parks and Facilities:** The types of parks with the next largest service areas are regional parks and facilities. These sites are considered to command an area of interest less than countywide, but more than a single community or recreation council. Sizeable parks such as Meadowood Regional Park (96.2 acres), Northwest Regional Park (322.7 acres), Reisterstown Regional Park (79.7 acres), and Eastern Regional Park (122.5 acres) would fall within this category. Smaller sites which would regularly draw a significant number of visitors from more than the surrounding community would also be included—Southeast Regional Recreation Center (3.2 acres) and the Northeast Regional Recreation Center (6.4 acres). The acreage of regional sites would be allocated based upon their defined service area when performing parkland acreage needs analysis.
- c) **Community and Neighborhood Parks:** Both of these park types are considered to provide for “local” recreation. Community parks feature some type of facility that would be regularly utilized by one or more local recreation council, or draw visitors from outside of the immediate neighborhood. Facilities typical at such parks include ball diamonds, athletic fields, community centers, and picnic pavilions (which may be reserved through local recreation councils and offices). Neighborhood parks are generally utilized almost exclusively by residents of the surrounding neighborhood, typically being within walking distance and frequently lacking on-site parking. Facilities often found at neighborhood parks include playgrounds/tot lots and multi-purpose courts.
- d) **School Recreation Centers (SRC’s):** One of the foundations of community-based recreation in Baltimore County is the long-standing joint-use agreement between Baltimore County Public Schools and DRP. This agreement secures the use of nearly all public schools as dual-use educational and recreational facilities, thereby helping to maximize public investment. There are three basic types of school recreation centers—high schools, middle schools and elementary schools. Middle school recreation centers generally provide the highest level of recreational use to the programs of the County’s affiliated recreation councils, typically having more recreational facilities than elementary schools, and being more available for public program use than high school recreation centers (whose inter-scholastic sports teams, clubs and programs have first priority use of the facilities). In some cases DRP will construct park facilities on sites acquired to serve as SRC’s, but which are not yet developed with schools. These sites,

such as Nottingham Park, Mays Chapel Park, Dulaney Springs Park and Hydes Road Park, serve as parks until the need for a school arises. On occasion, Baltimore County Public Schools will release and transfer such sites to DRP when they are certain a school will not be needed or is not feasible given site conditions. Within the park acreage needs methodology employed by the County (based on State standards), 60% of the acreage of school recreation centers may be counted.

- e) Local Open Space (LOS): This type of land was previously described within the “parkland acquisition” section of this chapter. LOS is intended to have a very localized service area, providing for use and enjoyment by the development in which it is situated, or the immediate neighborhood surrounding its location. The physical nature of LOS is variable, with some parcels being entirely wooded and/or including sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands or streams. Other LOS parcels are open, grassy and relatively flat, being conducive for limited recreational uses (e.g., playing “catch,” community gatherings, picnicking, walking dogs, etc.). LOS regulations were refined to require that the substantial portion of newly dedicated LOS must be relatively flat and open, and thereby more usable for limited recreation purposes. Another function of LOS is to simply provide open, green space within developments; helping to make the neighborhood more attractive, providing a visual break from the man-made surroundings, and contributing multiple environmental benefits. LOS and other forms of open space may only have one-third of their acreage counted towards the County’s parkland acreage goal based on the standard acreage analysis methodology. When a LOS is improved with recreational facilities, it is reclassified as a neighborhood park for inventory and parkland acreage needs evaluation purposes.
- f) Other Types of Parklands: A variety of other site classifications are utilized by Recreation and Parks for inventory and parkland needs analysis purposes.

Undeveloped parks and undeveloped school recreation centers are non-LOS properties which are intended to remain natural and undeveloped. This category of parkland also includes unimproved stream valleys, drainage and utility reservations, and forest buffer reservations, regardless of the County agency that administers said property. For parkland calculation purposes these are considered natural resource lands and only one-third of their acreage may be counted towards the County’s acreage goal. This classification previously included park sites that are likely to be developed as parks in the future, but are presently in an unimproved, natural state. Such sites are now classified as parks (rather than open spaces) within acreage calculations in order to more accurately reflect their intended use.

Community centers, whether stand-alone with no surrounding recreational facilities, or situated at a park with other facilities, supplement the indoor recreational facilities provided within school recreation centers. Some centers, such as the Arbutus Recreation Center, are assigned specifically to DRP and fall entirely within the agency’s purview. Community centers such as the new Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center are multi-agency buildings with only portions of their space dedicated for recreation purposes, but which feature other important community-serving facilities such as health and senior centers.

The community centers are also regularly utilized as meeting places by civic organizations and citizen groups.

Leased recreation sites are lands leased by the County for the purpose of providing public recreation. Examples include State-owned sites such as Millers Island Park, Kingsville Park, and the Merrick/Willow Grove portion of Cromwell Valley Park; and privately owned land such as Chestnut Ridge and Saint Patrick's Field. These sites feature recreational improvements that are used by local recreation councils and the general public, though their acreage may not be counted towards the County's parkland acreage goal.

Waterfront parks fall within the previously listed classifications (i.e., countywide parks, community parks, undeveloped parks, etc.), but are considered particularly important components of the County's park system. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are geographic entities that help define the nature of Baltimore County. The preservation of lands and delivery of diverse recreational opportunities along the County's waterfront remains a high priority. Many of the County's waterfront parks have been enhanced with facilities such as fishing piers and boat ramps.



Rocky Point Park Beach, with the Baltimore County Sailing Center in the background. Baltimore County initiated a beach admissions fee structure change in 2011 to allow children 11 years of age and under to enter free of charge accompanied by a paying adult. The beaches offer convenient, nearby respites from Maryland's summer heat.

Greenways are linear parklands most often associated with streams, and are sometimes developed with trails or paths for recreational use. All greenways provide environmental benefits including stream valley preservation and the protection of wildlife corridors, and help to “green” the communities and other land areas they border.

All of the lands described above combine to form a park system that provides the citizens of Baltimore County with a myriad of leisure time possibilities and options. Natural areas and green open spaces, from small open spaces situated in urbanized areas to 15,000+ acre state parks, appeal to a certain sector of the population that wishes to experience nature or relax and wind down in the great outdoors. The diverse parks and recreational facilities provided at the neighborhood, community, regional and countywide levels serve as venues for both organized and informal recreational uses, and are instrumental to serving the programs of local recreation councils.

- **Funding Park and Facility Construction:** The three primary funding sources for parkland acquisition - POS, County bond dollars, and County general funds - also provide the majority of funding for park development and recreational facility construction. Other types of funding utilized for both acquisition and development projects include local open space (LOS) waiver funds, federal programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and donations. In the case of donations, local recreation councils often donate funding for specific capital improvements that would benefit the community they serve. Civic associations and private individuals/groups also sometimes donate money for specific park projects.

There are an assortment of other funding mechanisms that may be utilized for park development projects. Most such programs have very specific mandates and guidelines, and seek to achieve explicit goals such as enhancing waterfront access, providing opportunities for non-motorized transportation, and promoting community revitalization. Some of the key programs that the County has utilized to date include the State of Maryland's Waterway Improvement Fund (WIF) and Community Parks and Playgrounds (CPP) program, and the federal Transportation Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

Maryland Waterway Improvement Fund (WIF) moneys have been used to help finance the construction and rehabilitation of such waterfront facilities as boat ramps and fishing piers, as well as waterfront-related amenities. WIF has also been an important source for channel dredging projects that keep waterways open and usable for boaters. Unfortunately, the program (like many other land preservation and recreation funding programs) has suffered from a reduction in its revenue stream, as there has been a substantial drop in boat sale excise taxes and the State has been forced to restructure the program and reduce grant funding.

The CPP program is relatively new, having been established in fiscal year 2002 to fund capital improvements and rehabilitation projects targeted to established communities within priority funding areas (Baltimore County's priority funding area being the designated urban portion of the County, within the URDL). The County was granted more than \$5.2 million in CPP funding between fiscal years 2002 and 2009, an average of about \$650,000 per year, but State-legislated changes to the program restricted it to municipalities only starting in FY'10. This effectively prevented Baltimore County from using the program to benefit its citizens, as the County has no incorporated municipalities.

Another State funding source that the County has obtained in certain fiscal years is State Bonds. During the State's legislative session, local governments traditionally submit State Bond requests. These requests, if approved by the Legislature and the Governor, enable the

State to borrow money for the purpose of funding specific capital projects. For example, the Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 2009 granted \$3 million in matching bond funding to Baltimore County for renovation and enhancements to Robert E. Lee Park. The County also received a \$450,000 matching bond for the construction of the agricultural resource center at the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park. Baltimore County's legislative delegation at the State (State Senators and Delegates) have long been supportive of parks and recreation, and have been instrumental in advocating for and procuring bond funding through the legislative process.

The federal TEA-21 program provides funding for a variety of purposes, including bikeways, recreational trails, and scenic byways. The County has received a total of just over \$1.5 million in TEA-21 funding for three "viewshed" projects, one streetscape project, one pedestrian improvements project, and two trail projects-- one, the State's Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail, and the other, Baltimore County's Number Nine Trolley Line Trail. Baltimore County EPS also procured additional TEA-21 funding for a small trail construction project within the Chase/Eastern Regional Greenway.

The County has utilized the LWCF State Assistance Program, the federal government's key outdoor recreation funding program for state and local governments, for 19 projects since the County's first LWCF grant in 1977. These grants brought nearly \$3 million in LWCF funding to the table for a variety of park acquisition and development projects, including recent renovations to the historic Merrick House at Cromwell Valley Park, and the construction of Perry Hall (community) Park.

The funding programs identified above are the most frequently utilized sources of money for park acquisition, development and rehabilitation projects. Other sources include: funding that derives from another area of the County's capital improvement program, including federal grant money secured by other agencies for a purpose such as community revitalization; other grant or special funding from the State of Maryland; and miscellaneous federal and private grant programs.

Planning Process: Baltimore County employs a strong planning process in virtually all aspects of its operations. The County's Department of Planning is the lead agency for countywide comprehensive planning, and often acts as a "bridge" between citizens and County agencies. One of the best ways citizens can play an active role in the County's planning process is through participation in community plans and other topic-specific plans (e.g., the Eastern and the Western Baltimore County Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plans). As of December of 2011 there were fifty adopted community and special-purpose plans. In some cases there are numerous plans for the same geographic area or community, as updated plans were prepared in order to keep current and respond to change.

DRP participates in many countywide and community planning efforts with the Department of Planning and other County agencies, ensuring that public parks and recreation interests are served wherever appropriate. At the same time, DRP has its own comprehensive planning process. The LPPRP is the foundation of the agency's planning process, traditionally providing the guiding policies, goals and objectives for parks and recreation in Baltimore County. The

plan's scope of influence most significantly impacts and directs the County's investment in park acquisition, development and rehabilitation. This plan displays a high level of specificity, with general goals, objectives and policies identified in this chapter, and much more specific project-based priorities compiled in *Appendix C*. The LPPRP is brought through the County's plan adoption process, which includes review and approval by the Baltimore County Planning Board and the Baltimore County Council. This results in the LPPRP being adopted as an addendum to the County's Master Plan.

This LPPRP shall first and foremost be utilized as a guide for prioritizing the use of future parks and recreation capital funding within the Parks, Preservation and Greenways section of the County capital improvement programs. It is important to note that the projects identified within *Appendix C* are not the *only* parks and recreation capital projects that will be funded during the "life" of this plan. Needs and scenarios can change rapidly, and DRP and other County agencies must always have the flexibility to adjust priorities and respond to opportunities. Still, the projects within *Appendix C* should comprise the majority of capital expenditures for parks and recreation in the near future, and any new capital projects not listed herein must adhere to the goals, objectives and policies of this document. Alternately, some capital projects may be funded as a result of recommendations within community and topic-specific plans and reports, both existing and future. The LPPRP also serves as a primary resource for the compilation of the County's POS Annual Program, in which DRP lists the capital projects for which it envisions seeking state and federal funding in the upcoming years.

DRP reviews its capital funding priorities on a continuing basis, but formally on an annual basis. The agency staff that works within the communities throughout the County submit their priority requests based upon their experience with local recreation councils and knowledge of the communities and citizenry they serve. The needs identified are combined with those formulated by the agency's administrative staff, and are then prioritized based on a wide range of factors that relate directly to the goals, objectives and policies identified within the LPPRP. There is never sufficient funding available to address all of the identified needs, so the process of prioritizing projects is always essential.

The means for prioritizing projects to be funded varies by the type of project at stake. In general, there are three broad classes of capital projects—acquisition, development, and rehabilitation. The following describes the prioritization process used for each of these project types:

- **Acquisitions:** Baltimore County is approximately two-thirds of the way towards meeting the State's prescribed county parkland acreage goal of 30 acres per thousand citizens. Because nearly all areas of the County have parkland acreage deficits of varying extents, it is prudent to seek to acquire additional parkland in nearly all areas of the County. The method of selecting which parts of the County to target for parkland acquisition is somewhat complex, and not entirely regimented and precise. A wide range of factors play a role in deciding where to target the available acquisition funding resources at any given time. Some of the key factors evaluated include:
 - a) **Acreage Needs:** The amount of acres of parkland per thousand citizens in a given geographic area or jurisdictional entity (i.e., recreation area, community or council) plays

a partial role in prioritization, but may not be of primary significance since nearly all areas of the County have some parkland acreage deficit, and the use levels of existing parklands may vary by community.

- b) **Recreational Needs:** It is a principal priority of DRP to ensure that sufficient recreational opportunity is provided countywide. This factor will often be reason enough to pursue acquisition of land in a given area that has obvious recreational facility needs, but no existing undeveloped parkland suitable for the construction of the required facility(s). This factor is also closely tied to the State goal of providing parklands and recreational opportunities in close proximity to the population to be served.
- c) **Growth Trends:** It is important to be aware of the County’s population and housing growth trends, and to understand the potential impacts of these trends from a geographic standpoint. Over recent decades two specific locales in Baltimore County, Owings Mills and Perry Hall-White Marsh, were designated as growth areas. These areas were intended to be the targets for concentrated, planned growth that continues today. It was therefore essential that DRP understood the scope of the expected growth (both geographically and in terms of population expansion), and respond to the projected parks and recreation needs that would result from that growth. In Owings Mills the original parks and open space plan, entailing the creation of a large lake with surrounding lands, turned out to be unfeasible, resulting in the County having to meet parkland needs in other ways. The County responded by acquiring several regional parks that would help service the growth area, and by aggressively pursuing greenways through the development process.



Northwest Regional Park and its diversity of recreational opportunities helps to meet the recreational demands of the citizens of the Owings Mills Growth Area and beyond

In Perry Hall – White Marsh “The Honeygo Plan” was established, with parkland being identified as a required “adequate public facility” for the first time. Concerted land

acquisition efforts were initiated, resulting in the acquisition of five new sites to serve the growth area. These new community park sites, along with Honeygo Run Regional Park, help to meet both existing and projected future recreational demands in the greater Perry Hall-White Marsh area.

The new high-density mixed-use redevelopment concept that is espoused in Baltimore County Master Plan 2020 poses a new growth management policy and method that will impact DRP's ability to provide a sufficiency of quality, diverse parks and recreation opportunities for County citizens. DRP is working closely with the County's Department of Planning and other County agencies to develop strategies for the Community Enhancement Areas such as the Middle River Redevelopment Area, to help ensure that appropriate parks and recreation accommodations are made within and/or in close proximity to redevelopment areas.

- d) **Availability of Suitable Land:** Certain communities within the URDL are almost entirely built out, with little or no suitable land available for the acquisition and development of viable park sites. This poses a challenging problem, as those communities tend to have unmet recreational needs and lack undeveloped parkland capable of further recreational development. A prime example is the greater Towson-Towsontowne community. Acquisition opportunities may not exist or be scarce in such areas of the County, and properties that do become available (and usually feature existing improvements) may be prohibitively expensive. In rural areas the difficulty of finding property suitable to serve as parkland faces somewhat different challenges. Facility-rich parks in rural areas are best situated in a centralized location that serves the more dispersed population, preferably with good road access since most park visitors will be driving to the park(s). Meanwhile, properties encumbered with agricultural land preservation easements or targeted as high priorities for agricultural or natural resource preservation are best avoided for parks that will feature recreational improvements. DRP consults with the County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS) when investigating sites in rural areas, so as to avoid conflicts with other land conservation programs/initiatives.
- e) **General Goals, Objectives and Policies:** Certain types of acquisitions may be pursued as a direct result of State or County goals, objectives or policies. At times special initiatives are initiated for the purpose of achieving goals and objectives, and to put policies in action. The County's regional parks initiative was aimed at addressing widespread unmet recreational needs, acquiring parkland to make progress towards the State goal, accommodating planned growth, and providing parkland and facilities for the use of some communities in which there was little or no suitable land available for the acquisition and development of community or neighborhood parks. Numerous sites have been acquired for the explicit purpose of community conservation/revitalization. Still others have been pursued because of their waterfront location and the County's long-standing commitment to provide citizens with access to the Bay and its tributaries.
- f) **Partnerships:** DRP sometimes invests in acquisition of sites in partnerships with other agencies. The most common example would be school recreation center sites that are

typically purchased with funding from both the agency and Baltimore County Public Schools. On occasion the County partners with Maryland DNR to acquire land that will then be owned and administered by one agency or the other. Such State-County acquisitions typically feature a natural resources component. Such was the case with the acquisition of the BeeTree Preserve Conservation and Public Recreation Access Easement on property adjacent to the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail in northern Baltimore County.

- Development: This classification of capital project includes two general sub-classes, new park development, and park improvements.
 - a) New Park Development: New park development can take place shortly after a site is acquired, or many years later on a site that has been “land banked” and sitting undeveloped. Those projects that take place shortly after site acquisition are usually situated in areas in which immediate recreational needs exist, or in areas in which strong growth is taking place and a subsequent expansion in recreational demand is anticipated. Alternately, the development project could be taking place on a site that is acquired as part of a County initiative such as community revitalization. In such cases it is not unusual for the acquisition and development phases to be tied closely together, with funding allocated in consecutive fiscal years to expedite the creation of a new park. This, however, has become a less frequent occurrence as a result of recent fiscal challenges, as the figures below attest:

<u>New Parks Developed Within 5 Years of Site Acquisition: FY’s 2003-2012</u>	
FY’s 2003-2007	7 parks
FY’s 2008-2012	3 parks

New park construction on long-owned undeveloped sites typically takes place as a result of recreational demands outgrowing the available recreational facilities in a given area, or to accommodate new population growth that is taking place. Such projects can prove contentious from a public relations standpoint, as neighbors and nearby residents of the site may have grown accustomed to the parkland being undeveloped and assumed that it would always remain so. An important element of all new park development projects is public input. A series of public meetings are hosted by DRP prior to the design phase for new park development, and for major park improvement or rehabilitation projects. In the case of new parks, the public is initially offered the opportunity to say what types of facilities and areas they do and do not wish to have provided at the site in question. This information is used to create a number of “concept plans” that are presented in another community meeting, and which reflect both public demands and site conditions including areas suitable for development and those that must be preserved (e.g., forest buffers, steep slopes). Multiple meetings may be necessary to establish and select a concept that is most amenable to the public. The extent to which these plans are thereafter implemented depends upon available funding and competing priorities.

The initiation of any park development project, whether new or at a long existing park site, is largely dependent upon the amount of capital development funding available and

the immediacy of need in the area in comparison to other sites and communities. When fiscal resources are considerably limited few new park development projects will take place, with capital resources instead having to be concentrated upon renovation and rehabilitation projects to guarantee that existing parks and facilities remain safe and functional.

- b) Park Improvements: Park improvement projects are far more numerous than new park development projects, and may range from something as small as the installation of a picnic grill, to the construction of a major facility such as a ball field, fishing pier, athletic facility lighting, or storage/restroom/concessions building. There are literally hundreds of such requests from staff pending at any given time, with most such requests having an impact upon a facility's or site's ability to serve the programs of the local recreation councils. Since most parks and recreation sites (and a much larger proportion of the population) are situated within the URDL, the vast majority of park improvement funding is invested within the communities within the URDL. Some park improvement projects may be expedited if a recreation council or other organization or group contributes partial or full project funding.

Another factor that sometimes plays a role in determining whether or not, or when a new park or improvement project is funded is the availability of "outside" funding sources—that is, funding not already programmed within Recreation and Parks' budget. The procurement of unanticipated government and private funding sources such as grants and donations can often lead to the activation of a project that had previously gone unfunded. As with new park development projects, few park improvement projects take place when funding is extremely limited and must instead be dedicated to park and facility rehabilitation.

- Rehabilitation: The County's parks and recreation funding resources must not only accommodate new growth and recreational demands through park acquisition and development, but rehabilitate the hundreds of existing sites that have been in place for many decades. As parks and facilities age, they become worn by use, weather and other factors, and in some cases become outdated. It is therefore important to invest sufficient capital funding into site rehabilitation and replacement in order to keep facilities safe and functional. The County has been pro-active in addressing the challenge of aging parks and facilities, undertaking a number of comprehensive capital renovation and replacement programs. Recreational building, sports court, parking lot, fencing, ball field, facility lighting, and playground equipment renovation and replacement programs upgrade older facilities whose condition has deteriorated, or which have become outdated. In some cases safety standards are updated, resulting in a need to conduct renovations to adhere to new guidelines or requirements. Within such programs, matrices are sometimes established to prioritize the facilities in need of renovation/replacement, based on site assessments in which such factors as physical condition, public safety, and level of recreational use are considered and rated. These matrices are then utilized to set priorities for the available rehabilitation and/or replacement project funding. In rare circumstances, large-scale park rehabilitation projects are initiated to "reinvent" parks that no longer meet the needs of local citizens. Such projects

are typically driven by citizens that express a desire to have a neighborhood or community park redesigned or upgraded.



Modular storage and concessions buildings such as this one at Bloomsbury Community Center are a cost effective means for meeting the storage needs of site recreation programs while concurrently providing the volunteer recreation and parks councils with opportunities to conduct concessions-based fundraising to support public recreation programs.

Zoning, Growth Management and Development Regulations: Baltimore County has formulated and implemented one of the State of Maryland’s most highly-touted zoning processes to effectively control growth. A variety of residential, commercial and industrial zones have been created and applied to channel the vast majority of development to areas within the URDL. Strong resource conservation zoning that greatly limits the use of land and density of development is meanwhile applied to areas outside the URDL. Thus, zoning is central to the County’s growth management strategy. Every four years the County conducts a “comprehensive zoning map process” (CZMP) in which any person, property owner, business or community association may petition for a zoning change on any property in Baltimore County. Other zoning revision requests may be made by Department of Planning Staff, the Planning Board and the County Council. The 2004 CZMP, which implemented a new resource conservation zone termed “RC8 – Environmental Enhancement,” featured zoning revision requests that covered vast geographic areas outside the URDL. In the 2004 CZMP 91% of the acreage involved was situated in the rural area of the County. A key result of that CZMP process was the reclassification of large amounts of acreage within resource conservation zones, not to more permissive zoning types, but to other resource conservation zones that allow less density for residential development. Other growth management measures are implemented through legislative efforts, as was the case with the establishment of the “Neighborhood Commons” (NC) overlay district in early 2012, whereby the preservation of open spaces by community and advocacy groups is encouraged.

There is no specific zoning classification for parkland within Baltimore County. Instead, parks and recreation sites tend to be zoned in a manner compatible with the area in which the sites are situated. Sites in residential areas within the URDL tend to have the same or similar density residential zoning as surrounding residences. Parks within resource conservation areas usually have the same resource conservation zoning classification as surrounding properties. The most significant effect of zoning on parks and recreation is the impact zoning has on property values. Certain zones command very high per acre land values, thereby making parkland acquisition in such areas more difficult.

The development regulations and other regulatory mechanisms in place within Baltimore County have a more noticeable impact upon land preservation in general, and recreation, parks and open space in particular. These regulations ensure that environmentally sensitive areas and important natural resources are safeguarded (see the *Natural Resource Conservation* chapter herein), and that developers help contribute to public infrastructure needs. In most cases developers must complete roadway and sidewalk improvements, helping to enhance both motorized and pedestrian access. The regulations with the most impact upon parks, recreation and open space, however, are those incorporated within the previously described *Baltimore County Local Open Space Manual*. The manual and the program guarantee that residential development companies and partnerships help meet the needs of the individuals moving into their developments by dedicating mandatory open space and greenways, and/or paying a fee-in lieu of open space.

See the Baltimore County Master Plan 2020 for more detailed information on zoning, growth management and development regulations.

Addressing Specialized Recreational Needs: The County and DRP strive to provide for the recreational needs of all sectors of the population. The capital improvement program provides parks and facilities for all ages and abilities, and for a broad range of recreational tastes and demands. Effort has been invested in diversifying the design and construction of parks. Instead of constructing only the ball fields needed to serve the programs of local recreation councils, other facilities and amenities that would be attractive to other citizens are usually provided. For example, a paved path network might be provided to offer options to individuals of all ages, ranging from parents and grandparents with babies in strollers, to children on bicycles, to adults and senior citizens on foot or in wheelchairs. An accessible playground might be installed for the use of children, including individuals that require accessible playground surfaces and transfer platforms.

The County is aware that there must be a special emphasis placed upon the needs of certain members of the population, and is committed to providing targeted services to meet these needs.

- **Youth:** Meeting the recreational needs of children and teenagers has always been the top priority of DRP. A myriad of sports, arts, educational and social programs have long been offered through the local recreation councils, utilizing County facilities including parks, leased recreation sites and school recreation centers. These programs provide young people with experiences to grow in both mind and body, offering positive outlets into which they may channel their energy and creativity. The County realizes that the process of growing up involves innumerable choices, and that young people face many potential pitfalls along the

way. Concerted efforts have been made within the past decade to provide sufficient positive opportunities for all youths, in particular the children and teens that live in communities with higher than average unemployment, crime and substance abuse rates. Recreation and Parks has partnered with Baltimore County Police in the Police Athletic League (PAL) initiative. These centers provide youth within many such communities with a safe, fun and potentially life-changing place to go. Quality recreational opportunities are provided and PAL staff serve as mentors that offer guidance and act as positive role models and influences.



Members of the Mars Estates PAL, who participated in a stream cleanup project at Back River, take a moment to pose with the fruits of their labor.

Parks and recreational facilities likewise play an important role in offering all youths venues at which to recreate, whether through organized recreational programs, or on an informal basis during their free time. Parks help to keep kids “off the street,” and offer safe places to play, ride bicycles, or simply experience nature. The County’s natural and historical interpretive facilities in particular play a role in educating young people about the environment, history and culture. The Marshy Point Nature Center is now one of two environmental interpretation centers visited as part of Baltimore County Public Schools’ fifth grade environmental studies curriculum.

- **Senior Citizens:** The County continues to exert significant resources and efforts into meeting the leisure time needs of the aging population. As indicated previously, efforts are being made to make new parks as usable for all ages as possible. Programmatically, DRP will continue to supplement the leisure options made available to seniors by the Department of Aging (the County’s lead agency for senior services) at 20 senior centers throughout the County. In some circumstances County capital resources are maximized by construction of community centers with space for both DRP and Aging programs.
- **Individuals with Disabilities:** Baltimore County is committed to delivering quality recreational opportunities to all citizens, regardless of their physical or mental abilities. Realizing that many citizens require special accommodations in order to participate, DRP

strives to make its recreational facilities as universally accessible as possible, and has established a Therapeutic Recreation Services office. New facilities constructed at County parks and recreation sites adhere to Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), ensuring that individuals with disabilities are provided reasonable access to the opportunities these facilities offer. The County has also constructed a series of specialized facilities targeted towards individuals with disabilities. A prime examples of this is Rockdale Park, which features a paved wheelchair ball diamond, community gardens with raised boxes that are more readily accessible to people in wheelchairs, a wheelchair discus/javelin area, and accessible playground and picnic pavilion, all connected by paved paths. A number of “super-accessible” playgrounds with rubberized surfaces have been constructed throughout the County as well. Another standout facility is the Talmar (Therapeutic Alternatives of Maryland) Gardens and Horticultural Therapy Center at Cromwell Valley Park, which utilizes greenhouses, gardens and other areas/facilities within its enriching horticultural therapy programs.

DRP’s Therapeutic Recreation Services office provides a wide variety of recreation opportunities and services for individuals with disabilities countywide. The office designs and provides programs designed specifically for individuals with disabilities, furnishing specialized adaptive equipment where necessary. The office likewise arranges for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities within the general recreation programs provided by recreation councils, with the goal being reasonable accommodations for full participation in all agency programs.

Joint-Use and Other Agreements: The most important and extensive joint-use agreement impacting recreation, parks and open space is the agreement between DRP and Baltimore Public Schools (BCPS) that provides for the County’s public schools to serve dual educational and recreational roles. Beginning in 1952, this agreement serves as a key example of the maximization of capital and physical resources. There are currently over 160 school recreation centers countywide, each providing recreational facilities that are used to varying extents for both school and recreational purposes. Nearly all school recreation centers feature gymnasiums, activity rooms, storage, restrooms, ball fields and sports courts. Some schools also include auditoriums/theaters and other rooms assigned used for arts activities and programs. Elementary school recreation centers provide playground equipment that supplements the playgrounds/tot lots provided by DRP, and many high schools also feature running tracks that are well utilized on an informal basis by the public when scholastic sports activities are not taking place. In recent years, DRP-funded synthetic turf fields (and, in some cases, associated lighting systems) were installed in place of grass fields at five high school recreation centers and at two community colleges, with special facility specific joint-use agreements established to formalize field use priority. The construction of these fields significantly expanded facility use by the programs of the local recreation and parks councils. DRP also assisted in the funding of a number of high school recreation center stadium facilities, assisted by State bond funding. The general joint-use agreement for school recreation centers remains a vital strategy without which many recreational programs offered by local recreation and councils would not be possible.

Additional public recreation opportunities are provided via the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), with campuses in Catonsville, Essex and Dundalk. Limited access is provided

at CCBC swimming pools and ball fields for the recreation council programs. The CCBC campuses, like other colleges and universities across the County, also provide recreational and leisure opportunities for their students and alumni.

Leases provide another type of agreement that helps the County to better deliver sufficient recreation services. Baltimore County leases parkland from civic organizations, private institutions, the City of Baltimore, and the State of Maryland. Various recreation councils arrange their own leases with private parties to provide recreation program space when there are insufficient County resources. Sites leased to serve as parks or provide recreational opportunities include:

Site Name	Acres
Robert E. Lee Park	~415.0
Cromwell Valley Park – Willow Grove Area	269.0
Loch Raven Fishing Center	~5.0
Kingsville Park	22.0
Prospect Park	20.0
Sandy Hills Park (portion of site)	3.7
Villa Maria	5.0
Campus Hills	4.0
Christian Temple	6.0
Millers Island Park	6.0
Wilson Point Park (State-owned portion)	7.0
Chestnut Ridge	4.0
Saint Patrick’s Field	2.3
Long Green Baptist Church	1.6
Saint John’s Church	0.7
Towson American Legion Field	3.0

The manner and cost of these leases varies widely, but in all cases public access is obtained and the sites are actively utilized. Conversely, Baltimore County leases out some of its properties to groups and individuals where appropriate. In the case of parks and recreation, some park sites that have yet to be developed are leased to farmers as an interim activity until the site is to be developed. Numerous former park caretaker houses are also rented out by the County.

Protecting and promoting the Natural Environment: DRP strongly believes that people need to be able to experience the natural environment before they can truly appreciate its majesty and vulnerability. While the Department’s primary charge is providing recreational opportunities, especially of a local nature, its role as a major landholder puts the agency in a position to positively impact the natural environment. Thousands of acres of natural resource lands and sensitive environmental areas are preserved within Baltimore County’s parks. In many cases park visitors are unaware of the extent of preserved lands – particularly woodlands – as they instead focus on the developed portion of parks. Each of the following parks features over 100 acres of woodlands:

PARK	WOODED ACRES*

Oregon Ridge Park	900
Rocky Point Park and Golf Course	125
Cromwell Valley Park (partial lease)	170
Northwest Regional Park	200
Honeygo Run Regional Park	105
Marshy Point Park and Nature Center	275
Banneker Historical Park and Museum	105
Robert E. Lee Park (leased)	260
Western Area Park, incl. golf courses	110
BeeTree Preserve (easement)	235
Total:	2,485

*- approximate acreage

It should be noted that the above chart does not include non-park sites preserved through other land conservation programs such as Rural Legacy, nor does it include vast forested areas within Maryland State Parks or the reservoir properties.

Most of the County's regional and countywide parks and facilities protect sizeable natural areas, conserving woodlands, wetlands, stream valleys, steep slopes, and providing valuable wildlife habitat. The County's extensive greenways and stream valley park network protects miles of rivers and streams, helping to maintain water quality and protect the Chesapeake Bay, to which all of these rivers and streams flow.



More than 100 acres of woodlands lie beyond Honeygo Run Regional Park's paved loop path, here enjoyed by a pair of senior citizens. Honeygo's woods tie into an even larger network of woodlands, including those within adjoining greenways and open spaces. The woods also help to buffer and protect Honeygo Run.

Previous mention has been made of DRP's interpretive facilities, all of which offer some degree of environmental education. These dynamic facilities welcome visitors and expose them to the

natural areas featured within the parks in which the centers are situated. Interpretive displays and programs provide insight about the natural environment, as well as the historical and cultural aspects of the area. The interpretive facilities and programs (both on and off site) take a hands-on approach that is generally very effective in developing an appreciation of the natural environment. Efforts to enhance the County's interpretive parks and facilities continue, with improvements having been made at Marshy Point Park and Nature Center (a Chesapeake Gateways site), Banneker Historical Park and Museum, and Cromwell Valley Park over the past several years.

DRP works with the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS) to facilitate environment-friendly projects within County parks. These range from shoreline and stream enhancement projects, to water quality improvements, to forest health assessment studies and programs, to the establishment of reforestation areas. EPS also assists DRP with environmental assessment of prospective parkland acquisitions, and with the identification of sensitive environmental areas and buffers prior to park construction or enhancement projects.

Promoting Economic Development and Tourism: Parks and recreation continue to play an important role in economic development on a variety of levels. Park construction projects have long provided employment opportunities, going back to the days of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's and 40's. Modern projects employ a diversity of trades, professions and businesses, from engineering firms that prepare project plans and documents, to construction contractors, to purveyors of landscaping trees and plants. These projects also help support the companies that manufacture such products as playground equipment, modular buildings, and lighting equipment. On-call contracts are of particular value to the local economy, employing numerous companies whose owners and workers often live in the immediate area. Park maintenance operations require equipment and materials to perform their maintenance functions and complete minor park improvements, purchasing many of these goods from local companies. Similarly, manufacturers, distributors and merchandisers rely heavily upon public recreation programs to purchase sports equipment, uniforms, etc. Program participants and visitors to County parks also support the local economy by patronizing nearby retail, food and beverage businesses.

Numerous studies have found that quality parks and open spaces have a significant positive influence upon property values. These studies have found that the property value of homes adjacent to or in close proximity to parklands is often enhanced by the presence of the parkland. A prime example of this phenomenon is the State's Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail (formerly the North Central Rail Trail). Originally opposed by many of its neighbors, the trail is now highlighted as a key selling point within real estate listings for nearby homes. The County contributes to the wellbeing of neighboring property values by ensuring that its parks are attractive and well maintained. The availability of parks and recreational facilities sometimes plays an important role in the decision making process of individuals and businesses that are contemplating a move to the County or a given community. The green space provided within parks and open spaces also contribute to the attractiveness of an area, and can be an important factor in a prospective homebuyer's perception of a community.

While the expansion of tourism is not itself a primary DRP aim, there is no doubt that the County's parks, facilities and recreation programs draw countless numbers of visitors to Baltimore County. Major parks and facilities such as the County's Oregon Ridge Park, the County-leased Robert E. Lee Park, and the State's Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail regularly draw large numbers of visitors from outside the County. Special events and multi-day tournaments, particularly at the regional parks, bring in visitors and participants that spend one or more nights in the area. These individuals spend their money at local hotels, restaurants, gas stations, etc., supporting local business and generating additional tax revenues.

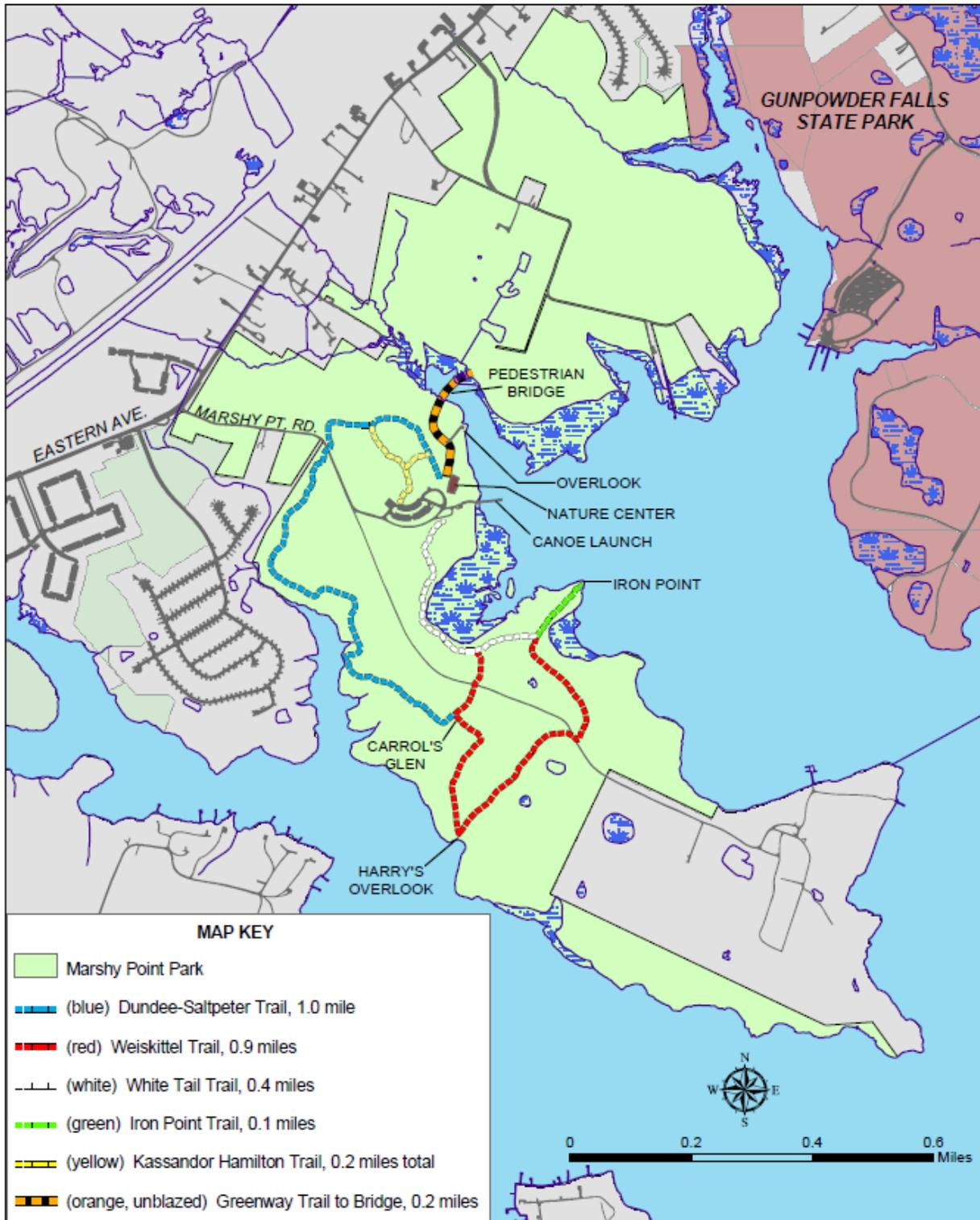
Using Technology to Enhance Services: Scientific and technological advancements have greatly enhanced the ability of governments to deliver quality public services, while bringing about entirely new public expectations. DRP utilizes technological resources in virtually all aspects of its operations, to both perform its duties more efficiently, and enhance public services. As an example, over the past decade and a half the use of geographic information systems (GIS) has greatly expanded for a variety of purposes. Preliminary site investigation for prospective acquisitions, review of digital orthophotography overlaid with property boundaries to investigate maintenance and ownership issues, site analysis for the purpose of new park design, and the creation of assorted maps for public meetings, presentations, etc. are all examples of the use of just one type of computer software.

In the area of constituent services, a large volume of information on DRP's park system and services has been made available on the Internet, with the page dedicated to searching for recreational activities being a fixture on the County web site's list of "most requested services" (web page). Recreation and Parks web site visitation numbers have consistently increased each year, clearly showing how the Internet has become a primary information source for the public. Providing information online has made materials much more publicly accessible, and enhances the agency's ability to quickly direct constituents to the information they seek. The establishment of an agency e-mail account, over and above office e-mail accounts, has enhanced communications and given the public the opportunity to have their inquiries directed to the appropriate area without undue research and effort on their part. Another technological enhancement that has been implemented is a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS). This system allows for the streamlining of parks and recreation maintenance requests, better organizes everyday maintenance tasks, and substantially improves the collection of pertinent maintenance data. The success of the CMMS has resulted in the County exploring the feasibility of the system being expanded to other forms of property maintenance. Finally, in recent years DRP has employed geographic positioning system (GPS) technology to perform detailed and highly accurate trail mapping, leading to the production of new trail maps (see map on following page) and assisting with various trail management and planning processes.

All of the above programs, procedures and methods are utilized to the best extent possible to provide high quality recreational opportunities to the citizens of Baltimore County, and to effectively meet County and State recreation, parks and open space goals.

Sample trail map:

MARSHY POINT PARK & NATURE CENTER - TRAILS



Property lines compiled from existing deed information, and are not to be considered authoritative. Trail lengths are approximate. Map created by the Balto. County Dept. of Rec. and Parks, April 2010.