

# ***PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICIES***

*This chapter presents a summary of Plan recommendations for the provision of future park and recreation facilities and preservation of natural and cultural resources in Montgomery County. These recommendations focus on meeting the rapidly growing recreational needs of the County's residents while providing stewardship of County parkland and natural and cultural resources.*

## **RECREATION FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

***1. Adequately provide for the recreation needs of County residents, giving consideration to recreation trends and priority need areas.***

### **Acquire Land Suitable for the Development of Active Recreational Facilities**

- Examine the extent to which property owned by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission can accommodate active recreation without environmental conflicts.
- Acquire additional land where feasible in order to minimize negative impacts to natural and cultural resources.

### **Provide New Recreation Opportunities To Fill Needs Highlighted by Recent Park Surveys**

- Provide opportunities for natural and hard surface trails in park-like settings

- Expand ballfield opportunities by increasing the number fields, improving scheduling, and other means.
- Provide for new recreation trends in a timely manner including opportunities for in-line skating, roller hockey, and mountain bicycling.
- Provide opportunities for aquatic facilities, community recreation centers, and interpretive programs.
- Consider innovative techniques and locations to provide facilities particularly in urban areas, such as use of parking garage rooftops for roller hockey and skateboard facilities.

### **Reduce Ballfield Deficiencies**

- Provide new ballfield initiatives to help meet local field needs in ways that provide the least impact on the community.
- Consider the increasing number of soccer and baseball teams when planning new fields.
- Convert older fields when it is determined that they could be utilized more efficiently for another sport.
- Avoid overlapping fields where possible to reduce wear and minimize programming conflicts.
- Maximize field use by lighting additional fields, particularly at middle and high schools.
- Construct ballfield complexes at countywide recreational parks as soon as possible.

- Reconfigure fields in older parks where possible to meet changing needs.
- Establish new permitting policies to increase the efficiency of ballfield use and re-evaluate field use periodically to determine if future changes are needed.
- Fully integrate park and school fields into a unified permit system and work together with the school system to maximize use by providing improved condition of school ballfields.

### **Give Priority in Capital Improvements Programing to Locations with Highest Facility Needs**

- Consider PROS Plan need estimates for each area of the County when prioritizing CIP park projects.
- Provide additional Community Use and County-wide parks in areas where substantial growth is occurring, such as the I-270 corridor, the Route 29 corridor, and the Travilah area.
- Acquire additional sites suitable for park development in areas where there is a deficit of land owned by M-NCPPC.

### ***2. Use new methods and innovative techniques to address future recreation needs in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.***

#### **Create a New “Community Recreation Complex” Category for the park classification system.**

- When appropriate, cluster future local park ballfields and other recreation facilities in “community recreation complexes” to facilitate programming, maintenance, and reduce impact on adjacent residential areas.

- Provide clustered ballfield areas with adequate parking in locations where they are not directly adjacent to homes.

### **When Feasible and Appropriate, Foster Partnerships with Public Schools to Increase Recreation Possibilities.**

- Coordinate with Montgomery County Public Schools to provide improved maintenance and increased use of school ballfields whenever possible to meet community use needs.
- When possible utilize park/school sites to provide clustered recreation facilities.
- Consider surplus school property where feasible to provide additional ballfield needs.

### **Encourage Public/Private Partnerships in the Development of New Park Facilities.**

- Use public/private partnerships, where feasible and appropriate, to construct and operate new park facilities. Examples of this cooperation may include building community recreation facilities, constructing features such as indoor ice rinks or indoor soccer fields, and providing additional fields or improving the quality of existing facilities.
- Update site design guidelines and design standards in the Recreation Guidelines Report to assure appropriate design and construction of private recreation areas.

### **Maximize use of new technology to provide improved information for decision making.**

- Complete the GIS system mapping of the County’s natural resources.
- Develop a web page of historic resources for the general public.

- Produce and maintain a geographic database inventory of historic and archeological resources for internal use.
- Explore the use of the Internet as a primary distribution source of digital cartographic trail information and maps.

**3. Maximize use of the park system by maintaining facilities in an attractive, safe, and usable condition with special consideration for the needs of the disabled.**

**Keep Existing Parks and Facilities Well Maintained.**

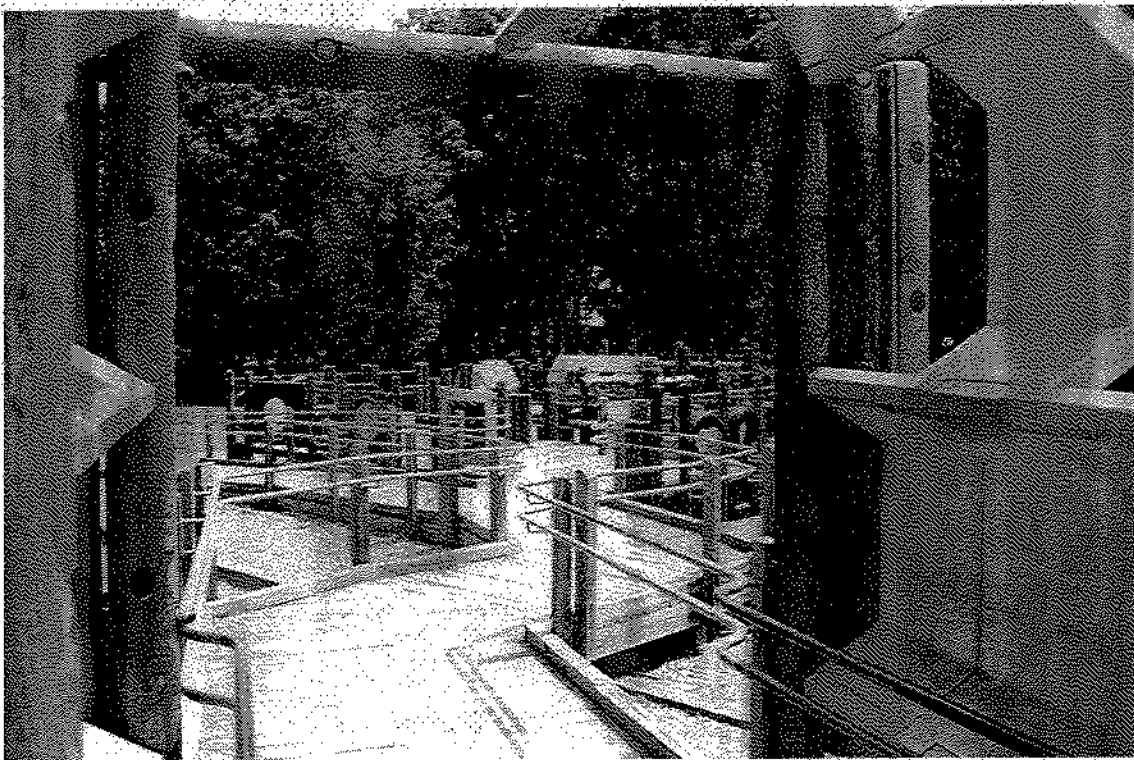
- Increase support for maintenance efforts to reduce future maintenance costs and potential safety hazards.
- Rehabilitate older parks to keep them safe and usable where and when necessary.

**Increase Training and Coordination Opportunities for Volunteers to Assist with Park Maintenance.**

- Foster “Friends” and volunteer groups to augment staff and other resources.
- Increase the involvement, training, and coordination of volunteers for projects such as natural surface trail maintenance and construction.

**Continue to Emphasize Safety in Park System.**

- Augment the efforts of Park Police through pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle patrols.
- Maximize the use of design principles such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to help ensure park safety.
- Continue to encourage citizen involvement through park watch programs.
- Revitalize current urban area parks through redesign to meet CPTED principles.



*Mill Creek Towne Local Park*

## Provide Accessibility to County Parks and Facilities for Disabled Residents.

- Design new park development with the needs of the disabled in mind.
- Modify existing parks to accommodate the disabled.

## 4. Provide a trail and greenway network that links people, parks, and community facilities.

### Provide an Interconnected Trail System That Serves the Entire County.

- Offer geographic parity with natural and hard surface trails between up-County and down-County.

### Provide Safe Road Crossings for Trail Users.

- Ensure safe road crossings by implementing consistent design standards for safe, predictable, and uniform road signs, surface treatment, and striping such that motor vehicles will be aware of the potential to encounter trail users.
- Incorporate bridges, underpasses, etc., into new construction and renovation projects through the Capital Improvements Program or in connection with new private developments.

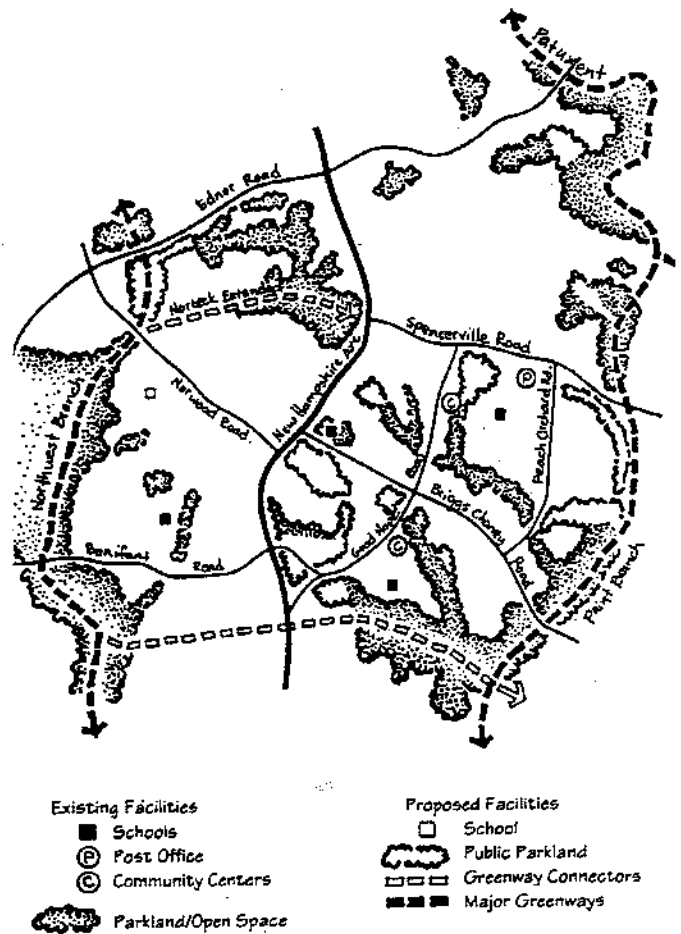
### Provide Historical, Cultural, and Environmental Education Along Trail Corridors.

- Evaluate trail corridors for their potential to offer historical, cultural and environmental education experiences.

- Provide trail markers and maps that educate the public as to the importance of these resources.

### Connect the Park System with a Network of Interconnected Trails and Greenways.

- Obtain public trail easements and develop a monitoring system to identify, protect, and enforce them.
- Encourage public dedication of greenways through the subdivision process where they provide community connections to parkland.



# NATURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS

## *1. Develop the park system on the basis of sound conservation principles and practices.*

- Meet the needs of recreation and preservation in a manner that is harmonious with the natural beauty and parkland physiography, reflecting full concern for the environment.
- Consistently use a planned approach to resource management, cognizant of the ecological interdependencies of people, the biota, water, and soil.

### **Park Planning Strategies**

- Prepare an environmental evaluation as part of park development or rehabilitation plans, including: review of the environmental guidelines, identification of stream buffers and floodplains, biodiversity areas, soils with severe limitations for development, contiguous forest habitat, and special fisheries management areas.
- Follow a hierarchy within parks of impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation when considering each element of any land use or development proposal affecting existing or master-planned parkland.
- Limit development of active-use areas in regional parks to no more than 1/3 of their total park acreage, with the remaining areas designated as natural areas and/or conservation areas. Development in other categories of parks should be determined on a case-by-case basis with full consideration of the of the recreation opportunity to be provided as well as the value of the natural and historical features.
- Limit construction on soils and slopes not suited for development.
- Provide opportunities to meet demands for passive recreational activities on parkland

(e.g., hiking, bird watching, wildlife viewing, picnicking, etc.).

- Ensure that development guidelines are reviewed periodically to make certain that they are environmentally sensitive and reflect current technologies and knowledge of the environment.
- Provide public information regarding the importance of natural areas and environmental studies that are prepared, and techniques proposed to minimize environmental impacts during construction.

### **Park Acquisition Strategies**

- Prior to parkland acquisition, consider the environmental and engineering feasibility of potential park development proposals or potential conservation areas.
- Encourage other public agencies and the private sector to assist in providing compatible open spaces, natural areas, recreation facilities and opportunities, greenways and greenway connections, stormwater management facilities, and other mitigation facilities.
- Encourage private dedication of land as a means of parkland acquisition.
- Examine the impact of increased maintenance and policing of facilities and resources dedicated to the Commission from the private sector during the subdivision process.

### **Park Management Strategies**

- Review as necessary the impacts of park use, development, and management practices on parkland.
- Protect lands and facilities under the control of the M-NCPPC from encroachment that would threaten their use as parkland.
- Maintain awareness of state-of-the-art environmental research and management techniques.
- Encourage and support research in the environmental sciences through other public agencies, institutions of higher learning, and the private sector.

- Support programs in outdoor education and recreation in the school system.
- Continue and expand public education about natural, historical, and archaeological resources issues affecting park operations, including development of educational programs regarding the importance of preserving natural areas, trail etiquette, etc.
- Preserve conservation areas and rare, threatened, and endangered species within the park system, including biodiversity areas.

## ***2. Connect parks and environmentally sensitive areas to form an open space and greenway system***

- Plan for and encourage the provision of greenways to connect urban and rural open spaces, to provide access to parkland, and to connect major stream valley park areas.

### **Park Planning Strategies**

- Work cooperatively to protect park connections and greenways throughout the planning and regulatory process.
- Identify locations to implement a County-wide trail system within parks in an environmentally sensitive manner.

### **Park Acquisition Strategies**

- Expand major stream valley park areas along smaller tributaries and over ridges between watersheds to provide greenway linkages and protect stream water quality.
- Provide connections between stream valley parks to create a network of greenways.

## ***3. Conserve county waterways, wetlands, and sensitive parts of stream valleys to minimize flooding, pollution,***



*Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park*

## ***sedimentation, and damage to the ecology, as well as preserve natural beauty and open space.***

- Minimize impacts from construction and operation of public and private facilities located in stream valleys, buffers, and floodplains; first priority should be given to preserving environmentally sensitive areas (avoidance), second priority to minimizing impact, and third priority mitigation.

### **Park Planning Strategies**

- Identify and protect wetlands and other sensitive parts of watersheds.
- Give consideration to stream and wetland buffers, stormwater management, and tree conservation early in the planning process.

### **Park Acquisition Strategies**

- Continue parkland acquisition in key stream valleys.

- Require open space dedications in new subdivisions that maximize protection of stream valleys and other sensitive environmental features.

### **Park Management Strategies**

- Develop programs to rehabilitate damaged streams.
- Plant and retain trees and other vegetation near streams.

### **4. Preserve high-quality forests**

#### **Park Planning Strategies**

- Consider tree conservation early in the park planning process.
- Identify and designate forest preservation and tree-planting areas.
- Ensure forest land conservation, tree planting, and related maintenance in new development.
- Minimize forest fragmentation to protect habitat continuity where the provision of recreation facilities can be accommodated near park perimeters.
- Encourage a pro-active urban forestry program.

## **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Identify historic and archeological resources**

- Produce and maintain a geographical database inventory of historic and archaeological resources.
- Research and analyze the significance of historic and archaeological resources in connection with area master plan updates.

### **2. Preserve and protect historic and archeological resources**

- Facilitate viable uses for historic properties, which will aid in stabilization and continuing maintenance.
- Protect the historic context of historic properties, including walkways, vistas, historic landscaping, agricultural open space, and other features of environmental setting.
- Expand public/private partnership program to decrease the fiscal burden of maintenance.
- Renovate buildings through park property management program.
- Train Central Maintenance crews in restoration construction.
- Preserve appropriate sites, with their environmental settings and districts, that are representative of a period or style, architecturally important, or associated with important persons, events, or activities.
- Preserve, with their environmental settings and districts, appropriate archaeological sites and landmarks of historical or cultural value.

### **3. Interpret historic and archeological resources**

- Provide regular interpretive and educational programs.
- Work with community residents to make historic sites important park focal points and viable elements of the community.
- Increase public access to historic sites in connection with railways, bikeways, and easements.
- Integrate interpretive programs into park master plans.