

Appendix 4: Parks and Open Space

Parks are essential components of community life. They provide for community gathering, foster a sense of place, and encourage environmental stewardship. In order to contribute to community character and quality of life, the location, size, amount, and type of parks should be carefully planned. Parks, open spaces, and trails should be designed as part of a comprehensive open space system that contributes to a sustainable community. To achieve this goal, an interconnected pedestrian and bike path system should link neighborhoods to parks and other destinations.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission made an early commitment to environmental stewardship and conservation when it was first formed in 1927 and began acquiring land surrounding the stream valley parks. This commitment provided the policy framework for the Wedges and Corridors concept in the 1964 General Plan (and subsequent 1993 *General Plan Refinement*) and has become an important principle that guides a wide range of planning and regulatory programs and projects.

County parks have been developed as a unified, interrelated system providing active and passive recreation as well as conserving resources throughout the County. Currently, the County's park system totals more than 34,000 acres, including 12,000 acres of stream valley parks that provide interconnected greenways. The challenge for the park system is to provide an adequate balance between the need for active recreation facilities for the County's expanding population while preserving and protecting our natural resources.

The *Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* (LPPRP) is updated every five years. The document provides a comprehensive set of recommendations and policy guidelines for future park development. During the process of updating a master plan such as the Gaithersburg West Master Plan, park and natural resource issues are reviewed and recommendations are provided. Collaboration among the Environmental Planning, Park Planning, and the Urban Design sections provides comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

A master plan update assesses the adequacy of existing recreational facilities and whether new resources should be provided for existing and future users. As the County nears build out and vacant land becomes scarce, it is critical for plans to address an area's active and passive recreational needs and determine whether there are any available and appropriate sites for parkland acquisition to meet future needs. Implementation of park recommendations identified in the LPPRP and the master plans occurs through the subdivision process, the County's Capital Improvements Program, private dedication, or the State's Program Open Space plan. The private sector's role in providing some open space amenities is often critical to creating a complete and comprehensive open space system.

County wide parks include those with either a recreational focus, such as the large regional parks, or a conservation purpose, such as the stream valley parks. Community use parks are smaller open spaces located in residential neighborhoods for the convenience of residents and these include urban, neighborhood, and local parks. Additionally, several thousand acres of parkland are shared with public schools, providing children and adjacent residents with open space, playing fields, tennis and basketball courts, and playgrounds.

Parkland in Gaithersburg West

The 2005 LPPRP identified the I-270 Corridor as one of three areas where population growth is highest, and where the corresponding need for additional recreation facilities will increase. Needs in the I-270 Corridor for rectangular fields were the highest in the County. The 1998 Park Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS) also stated “Land use patterns along the I-270 Corridor are continuing to encourage new employment centers and the growth of technology-based enterprises in that area. As a result, more and more people are moving to the communities along the I-270 Corridor. Germantown and Gaithersburg in particular have experienced dramatic growth compared to the rest of the County.” Increased population density and business development have significant impacts on the community’s need for park and recreation facilities.

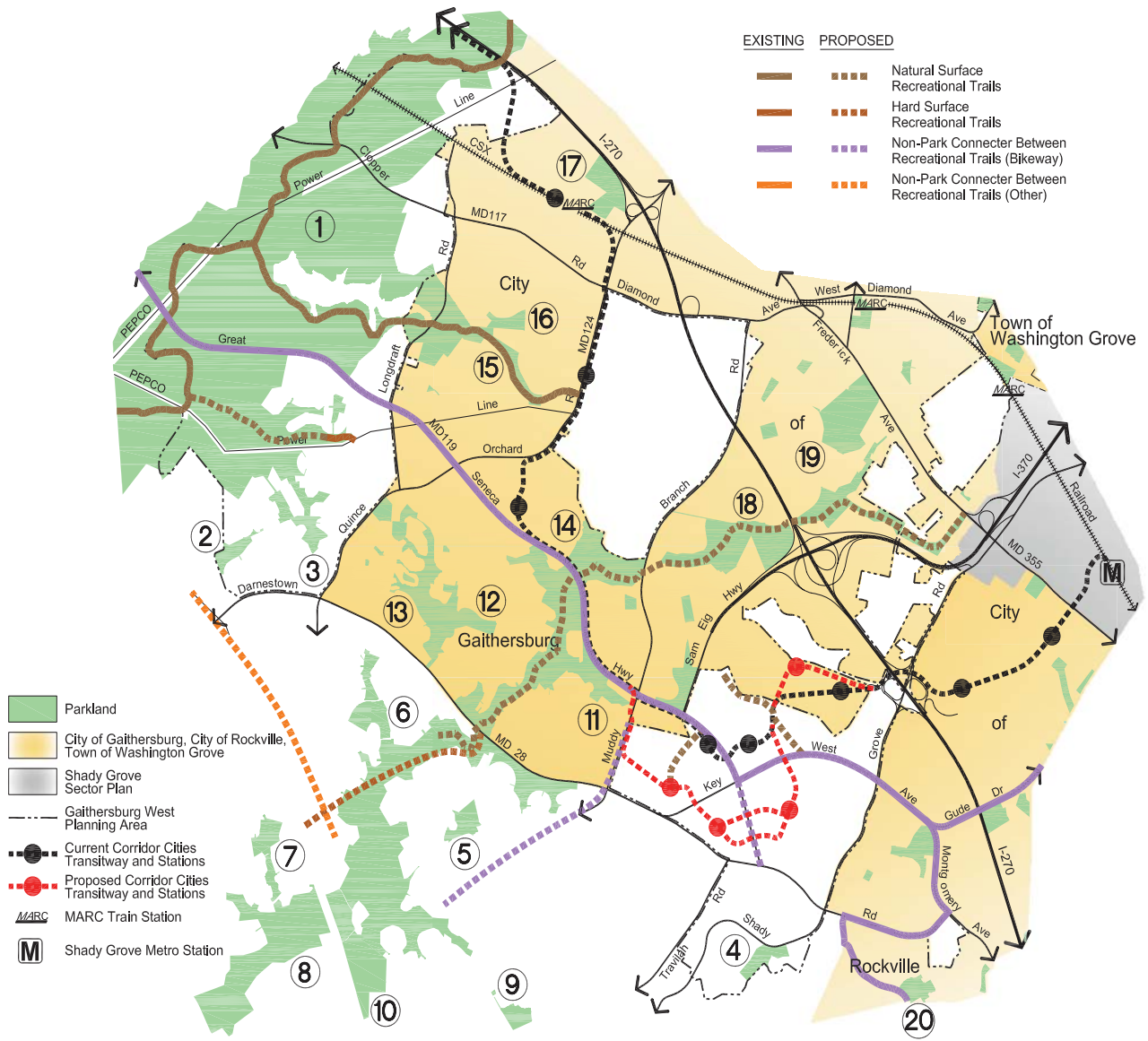
Within the boundaries of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan, there is currently one local park, two neighborhood parks, and a portion of the Great Seneca State Park. In addition, there are several parks nearby in Potomac. The cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville and Montgomery County Public Schools also provide park and recreation opportunities.

The following is a list of existing County parkland in and adjacent to the Plan area.

Existing and Approved Gaithersburg West Area Parks

Park Name	Acres	Status	Facilities
Traville Local Park (LSC South)	13.7	Undeveloped	None
Great Seneca Extension Stream Valley Park	1,824 – State 846 –M-NCPPC	Developed	Trails
Orchard Neighborhood Park	12.3	Undeveloped	None
Quince Orchard Valley Neighborhood Park	89.2	Developed	1 Softball Field, 1 Playground, 1 Basketball Court, 1 Recreation Center, 2 Tennis Courts

Parkland, Open Space, and Trails



- Parkland
- City of Gaithersburg, City of Rockville, Town of Washington Grove
- Shady Grove Sector Plan
- Gaithersburg West Planning Area
- Current Corridor Cities Transitway and Stations
- Proposed Corridor Cities Transitway and Stations
- MARC MARC Train Station
- M Shady Grove Metro Station

City of Gaithersburg

City of Rockville

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| 1 Seneca Creek State Park | 6 Quince Orchard Knolls Local Park | 11 Washingtonian Woods Park | 16 Robertson Park | 20 Glenora Park |
| 2 Orchard Neighborhood Park | 7 Aberdeen Local Park | 12 Lakelands Park | 17 Metropolitan Grove Park | |
| 3 Quince Orchard Valley Neighborhood Park | 8 Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park | 13 Kentlands Lakes Park | 18 Malcolm King Park | |
| 4 Traville Local Park | 9 Big Pines Local Park | 14 Muddy Branch Park | 19 Bohrer Park | |
| 5 Duffel Local Park | 10 Potomac Horse Center | 15 Diamond Farms Park | | |



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Existing Potomac Area Parks

Park Name	Acres	Status	Facilities
Quince Orchard Knolls Local Park	24	Developed	1 softball/soccer overlay, 1 basketball, 1 playground, 2 tennis courts
Aberdeen Local Park	14	Developed	volleyball, basketball, 2 tennis courts, ball field, playground, shelter
Big Pines Local Park	11	Developed	basketball, 2 tennis courts, ball field, playground, covered picnic area
Dufief Local Park	15	Developed	2 soccer fields, 2 playgrounds, 3 tennis courts
Potomac Horse Center Special Park	41.6	Developed	1 horse center
Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Unit #3	313	Developed	trails

Master Plan Vision

Existing parks will continue to serve residents of Gaithersburg and North Potomac. In the Life Sciences Center (LSC), a more compact, higher density land use pattern and a greater mix of land uses is envisioned in the future. Additional parks and open spaces need to be created to provide recreation opportunities that support and enhance the vision for the LSC. The future open space system for the area should support a vibrant and sustainable work life community by creating open spaces that will be easily accessible by walking or transit, and provide a range of experiences for a variety of people.

To that end, the Plan proposes the following vision of open spaces:

- a green common at each of the proposed Corridor Cities Transitway stations, one of which will serve as the civic green for the LSC West District
- a shared park/school site at LSC West (PSTA)
- construction of the undeveloped Traville Local Park
- integrated green corridors between and through major blocks linked by the LSC Loop that connects destinations and integrates passive and active spaces
- an additional active use Local Park in the Quince Orchard area.

The proposed Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA/LSC West) relocation provides a unique opportunity to create centrally located and well designed publicly owned open spaces. The fact that the property is already in public ownership provides numerous location and financial advantages.

The key park planning recommendations that are addressed in this Plan are highlighted below:

RECOMMENDATIONS	BACKGROUND
Designate a new urban park to serve as the publicly owned civic green at LSC West.	A new urban park likened to a civic green is needed to serve as the central open space for the LSC West community (on the relocated PSTA site). The proposed civic green is adjacent to a CCT stop planned in the area of highest residential density. This green will be publically owned and design details are outlined below.
Designate a site for a park/school at LSC West.	Due to increased residential development, an elementary school may be needed in the Master Plan area. It is desirable to combine the school with an active recreation park and some natural resource land into one combined site. The park site could provide a variety of experiences and functions including active recreation.
Designate two neighborhood greens at the CCT transit stops at LSC Belward and LSC Central.	These neighborhood greens should be privately owned and maintained for public use. The Belward neighborhood green includes the historic farm buildings and surrounding open spaces.
Develop the existing Traville Local Park in LSC South.	The Traville Local Park has been dedicated and rough graded to accommodate a small rectangular field, half court basketball, older children’s playground, and a tot lot. This park should be scheduled for final facility planning in the next 2009-2014 Parks Capital Improvements Plan.
Provide a cohesive usable pattern of public parks and private open spaces in the LSC connected by the LSC Loop.	The Plan emphasizes green connectivity and corridors. Not all open space can or should be publicly owned and managed parkland. Public amenity spaces in new developments will provide needed recreation and open space. A key planning issue is how to integrate public amenity space with parkland to create a cohesive and logical pattern of open space that is connected by the LSC Loop.
Connect trails and bikeways.	The Muddy Branch Trail Corridor (on-road hard surface portion) and a Countywide bikeway (DB-24) must be completed on Muddy Branch Road along the western side of the Belward property. Trail interconnectivity and internal circulation in this location should be determined during the review of specific development plans
Identify a new Local Park site in the planning area.	The 1990 Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan recommended new local parks on the Crown Farm (annexed by the City of Gaithersburg) as well as the Banks Farm (Belward). This Plan recommends an alternate local park site, ideally with two rectangular fields and other active recreation facilities. The Plan recommends the possible purchase of the Johnson property in the Quince Orchard area if it becomes available from willing sellers at some time in the future. The Plan also recommends active recreation on the Belward property.
Promote environmental stewardship in all decision making.	Develop all parks and open space in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Policy Guidance for Urban Open Space

Parks for Tomorrow (1998) indicates that areas such as Gaithersburg need several types of recreation including hiker/biker paths and community connectors, neighborhood recreation for new residential areas, and urban recreation and open space for existing and proposed businesses and mixed-use development.

Planning and Design

This Plan's recommendations recognize that compact, mixed-use areas present distinct challenges and opportunities to provide park and recreation resources and strive to incorporate and create those resources with redevelopment. The location, size, and type of open spaces appropriate to such a setting are unique. This Plan recommends a series of open spaces provided through a combination of public and private efforts.

Both residential and commercial development projects should provide a mixture of recreational facilities, open spaces, and trail connections that shape the public realm, help implement the Master Plan recommendations, and serve employees and residents. Consideration should be given to the following guidelines in location and development of parks and amenity open spaces.

1. They should be within a five to ten minute walk time for users.
2. They should include sitting areas, walkways, and landscaping.
3. Playground equipment and other small-scale active recreation facilities, such as multi-purpose courts, should be considered in areas serving a significant number of children.
4. Special consideration should be given to the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities.
5. Urban amenity open spaces located on the periphery of high-intensity non-residential areas should include facilities to serve nearby residents.
6. Design should provide crime prevention through environmental design by maximizing visibility and natural surveillance.
7. Amenity open spaces should be of a sufficient size to support appropriate use by residents or workers, and the public.
8. Consideration should be given to the appropriate amount of money necessary to support both the initial cost of the development and the long-term maintenance of the amenity space. As businesses are renovated or newly built in commercial and mixed-use developments, open spaces should be added to supplement public parks. Landscaping, seating areas, and public art can improve the area's appearance and improve the working environment.
9. Environmental features should be designed into parks, such as fountains in stormwater facilities that mask noise.

10. A key to providing adequate, close-to-home recreation is ensuring that opportunities are incorporated into plans for new development, which should provide private recreation areas for all age groups, as appropriate. Private redevelopment should include:
- level grass areas for leisure and informal play
 - adult recreation areas
 - walking and bicycling paths
 - playgrounds for young children
 - multi-use courts for children, teens, and young adults.

In multifamily housing developments, as well as higher density transit station areas, indoor recreation areas will be essential. Project development should explore innovative approaches to providing these facilities, including rooftops and indoor facilities such as playgrounds, gym, etc.

