

## PARK AND OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION

*... vast as the demand for outdoor recreation presently is, it pales beside what may be expected in future years.*

*President's Outdoor Recreation  
Resources Review Commission*

The park and open space acquisition program has the primary purpose of providing land to meet the outdoor recreation needs of our growing and increasingly recreation-minded population. In addition to providing out-of-doors enjoyment, the outdoor recreation areas contribute to the mental health, physical fitness, and nature education of people using them. They also provide a source of income for land owners and concessionaires, and can contribute to the conservation and multiple use of the Regional District's land and water resources.

At the same time the park and open space acquisition program is a key element in separating urban and rural areas, encouraging rural uses to prosper and urban uses to cluster together efficiently. While many small parks and open spaces will be needed inside the urban areas to lend quality and convenience, most of the large parks and open spaces will be located at the edges of the urban pattern.

Many different acquisition methods will be needed to establish the desired park and open space system.

Outright purchase of park land is the surest way to provide recreation facilities and help form the transition between urban

corridors and natural resource wedges. But since the amount of land that can be purchased is limited by available funds, it is of utmost importance to concentrate on acquiring park lands where they will have maximum effect and usefulness.

The present park plan for 1980 proposes to expand public holdings from the present 6,500 acres to 40,000 acres. Costs of this park system in the next 20 years are estimated at \$25.5 million.

Park purchases have been accelerated in recent years, resulting in more than a 50% expansion of the system since the beginning of 1958. Over two-thirds of the present park land is in stream valleys, but both local and regional parks outside the stream valley system are now receiving greater attention. The stepped-up pace of acquisition should be maintained and even increased.

The park acquisition program is reviewed every year to show specific plans for each of the next five years and a long term summary for lands to be acquired in later years. The annual review presents an excellent opportunity for bringing the acquisition program into closer conformance with the General Plan. Special attention will be given to the strategic location of large regional parks where urban corridors meet rural wedges.

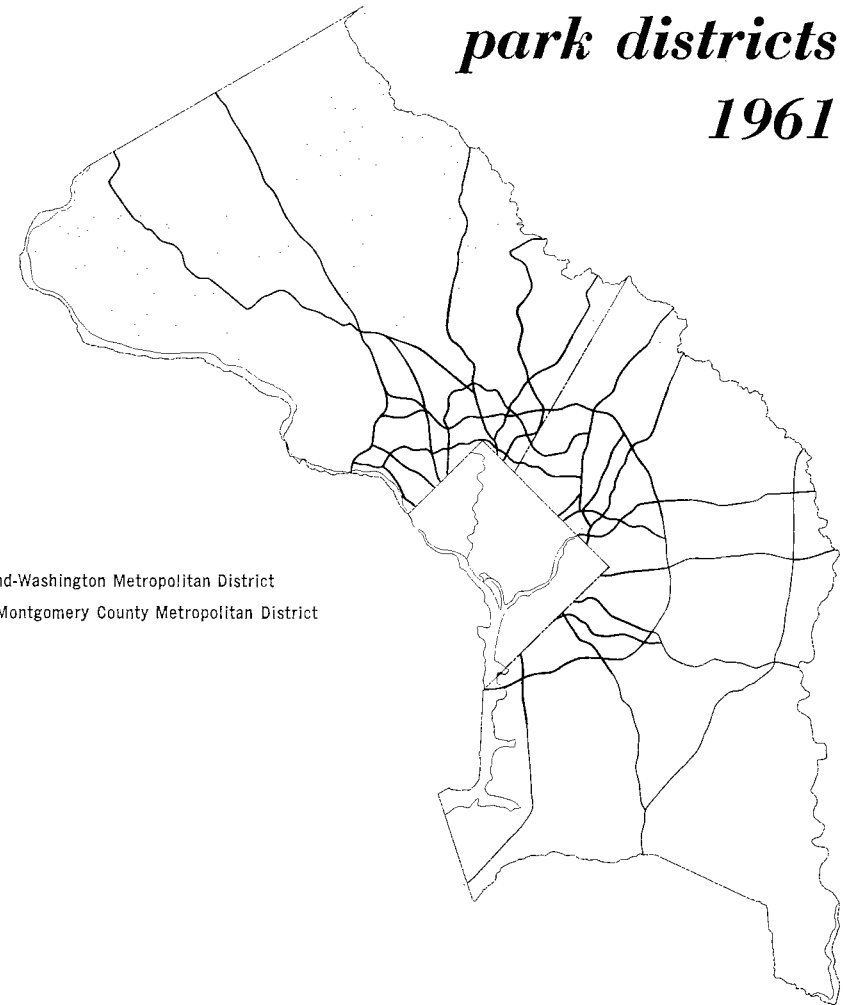
## *park districts* 1961

Lands to be acquired for parks in conformance with the General Plan can be reserved in the public interest through the subdivision regulations. There is great need not only to reserve park sites for later acquisition, but also to protect the sites from harmful destruction of trees and earthmoving. Reservation laws should be strengthened to assure this protection.

Park and open space acquisition is basically financed by local real estate taxes collected for the Park and Planning Commission with the approval of State and County legislation. Nearly 70% of the park system is in lower Montgomery County where the tax rate has been highest. The park tax was raised not long ago in suburban Prince George's County and the first regional park in the County has been acquired near Clinton. A small park tax is also levied in upper Montgomery County where some large parks are being acquired. In addition, it would be only fair to seek a small park tax from rural Prince George's County. The difference in tax rates—higher in urban areas and lower in rural—is justified by the fact that public parks and open spaces are needed mostly to satisfy the needs of the urban population.

Park district boundaries for urban rates should periodically be expanded to include new areas of urban development. This can best be done by local authorities at the time sectional map amendments to the zoning ordinance are granted in accordance with sequential zoning procedures explained in Chapter 5. The same method of expansion was suggested in Chapter 6 for the "suburban districts". The urban park tax districts should coincide with the suburban districts.

A secondary source of local park and open space revenue based on user fees could be tapped in the future if necessary.



Maryland-Washington Metropolitan District  
Upper Montgomery County Metropolitan District

All park and open space revenues will be spent in accordance with adopted master plans upon which the public and the County governments will have had an opportunity to comment. The park purchase and park development programs will continue to be carried out within the orderly framework of a long-range capital improvement budget.

*Federal Aid.* Since 1930 the Federal government has been stretching local park revenues in the Washington area by supplying one-third the land cost of stream valley parks. At present there is a new open space program under which up to 30% of open space acquisition costs can be paid for by the Housing and Home Finance Agency. Programs for converting farm land to recreational and conservation uses are being developed by the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Interior has just established a new Bureau of Outdoor Recreation dedicated to expanding the opportunities for outdoor recreation with more national parks and aid to local park systems.

The Park and Planning Commission is taking fullest possible advantage of stream valley aid under the Capper-Cramton Act and has recently applied to the Housing and Home Finance Agency for aid under the open space program. Aid under other Federal programs will be applied for as it becomes available.

The new Federal open space program provides greater aid to agencies which are following comprehensive metropolitan plans. The Commission has qualified for the maximum 30% aid, based on its bi-county authority, its close cooperation with the National Capital Regional Planning Council in preparing this General Plan, and its participation in an interstate agreement pledging cooperation with Virginia portions of the Metropolitan Area.

The Commission is in complete accord with the recommendation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission that "*Surplus Federal land suitable for outdoor recreation purposes should be made available to State and local governments at no cost . . .*"\* Federal aid in maintaining the Beltsville

Agricultural Research Center as a major open space is particularly important.

*State Aid.* The State of Maryland is acquiring a new park along Seneca Creek in Montgomery County, and already owns the Cedarville State Forest in southern Prince George's and Charles Counties. The State has also agreed to match the Commission's funds on a 50-50 basis for acquisition of park lands along the Patuxent River. Such activities as these should continue with increased emphasis.

*Installment Buying.* The Commission's program of buying farms for future recreational needs, by paying certain prescribed amounts each year over a number of years until the complete price is met, is proving very successful. By allowing the farmer to continue living on his farm and operate as usual until the last payment is made, the Commission gets a lower price. This program can probably be continued and expanded to everyone's benefit.

*Multiple Use Arrangements.* Many kinds of recreation and open space enjoyment such as hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and nature study can be practiced by the public without full public ownership of the land and without excluding other private uses, such as agriculture and forestry. By acquiring only partial rights to lands suitable for multiple use, the outdoor recreation program can be greatly expanded at relatively small cost. These possibilities should be studied thoroughly and the Commission should be given the authority, which it now lacks, to purchase partial rights to land.

\* *Outdoor Recreation for America*, p. 134.

## *park acquisition*

*Other Methods.* Several other methods of acquiring needed open space may be appropriate in certain cases to reduce the demand on park funds. Possibilities include gifts of land from philanthropic citizens, leasing out public lands for limited purposes when full public rights do not need to be exercised immediately, land transferred from excess acquisition for other public purposes such as highways, and transfer to the Commission of tax delinquent land. Required dedications and fees in lieu of dedication, as suggested in Chapter 7, also need serious study as potentially important methods of local park acquisition.

