

FROM ARTIFACT TO ATTRACTION: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES IN PARKS



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

The Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning
Countywide Planning
Historic Preservation Section

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Prepared by

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
The Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning
Countywide Planning
Historic Preservation Section
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning
Faroll Hamer, Acting Director
Bill Mooney, Acting Deputy Director
Jeff Zyontz, Chief, Countywide Planning Division

Strategic Plan Advisory Committee

Gwen Wright, Historic Preservation Supervisor
Michael Dwyer, Manager, Historic Properties
James Sorensen, Park Archaeologist
Heather Bouslog, Park Archaeologist
Susan Soderberg, Education and Outreach Planner
Eileen Emmet, Park Architect
Peggy Erickson, Director, Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County

Staff

Joey Lampl, Planner/Coordinator, Historic Preservation Section
Michele Oaks, Senior Planner, Historic Preservation Section
Claudia Kousoulas, Senior Planner, Community-Based Planning
Rosemary Prola, Intern, Historic Preservation Section
Abigail Thompson, Senior Administrative Assistant, Historic Preservation Section

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THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Derick P. Berlage, Chairman
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STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

Imagine going back in time, learning how family, friends, and neighbors lived, experiencing the textures, spaces, and objects that they and their ancestors knew. Discover that you haven't traveled far. You're in your own backyard, in your local park system. This is the vision of the historic preservation program at The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in Montgomery County. We are dedicated to making our historical, archaeological, and landscape properties useful to residents and visitors now and in the future, so that the stories of our shared heritage can inspire, inform, and entertain us, bringing us closer together as a community.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has been in the business of acquiring land and buildings since 1927, when it purchased its very first park properties. Over time, Montgomery County has become the owner of 32,000 acres of parkland, 395 parks, and 663 buildings.¹ Many of these buildings are historic. In fact, 157 buildings, sites, and objects have been classified as “cultural resources,” and the list includes structures, landscapes, and archaeological sites. This list is composed of resources as small as a well house and as substantial as a dairy barn.

With one of the strongest historic preservation laws in the state, the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning (the Department) is uniquely poised to identify, protect, and interpret this cultural resources inventory of properties located within its park system.

While some of these properties are listed on the *Locational Atlas of Historic Sites* or the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, others are not. But they all have been deemed to contribute to the unique telling of Montgomery County’s history. The Department’s cultural resources in parks include:

- 107 roofed structures (buildings and structures)
- 45 sites (archaeological, cemetery, or building ruins)
- 5 objects (boundary stones or other markers)

157 Cultural Resources in Parks

Stewardship of these resources involves acquisition, research, stabilization, interpretive or activity programming, architectural and engineering programming, restoration/rehabilitation, and maintenance.² While rehabilitation of a few, key historic properties in Montgomery County have turned them into destinations, many more properties on the inventory are worthy of similar treatment. A signature purpose of this document is to demonstrate that momentum is building around the rehabilitation of historic resources. Of the 157 resources in the Cultural Resources in Parks database, 20 properties represent the “jewels,” the most important projects to be undertaken over the next ten years, the lifespan of this Plan.

The cultural resources in parks inventory is meant to be a living, changing repository, wherein new acquisitions of a cultural or historical nature can be added to the inventory. These additions will occur as new parkland is acquired and/or as buildings come of age. In addition, the Top 20 Priority projects also can be refined as the Department acquires important new buildings. A

¹ According to the Park Development Division, this number of buildings includes both historic and non-historic structures. Most, but not all, are structures that the Department owns and operates.

² These terms are defined in the Glossary, many of them using National Park Service definitions—the universal standard for all historic preservation work. The definitions for “rehabilitation” and “restoration” may vary, therefore, from those employed in the *Maryland Building Rehab Code*.

building's reuse potential plus its condition/threat level should be used as guides for determining priorities.

Paying attention to cultural resources is important because historic buildings, landscapes, archaeological sites, and cultural artifacts have the power to engage the mind as well as the senses. Some historic structures tell us about park development (Meadowbrook/Rock Creek Stables and Kensington Cabin), while others remind us of the County's roots in agriculture (Needwood Manor and the Bussard Farm). Fresh air, green space, exercise, and historical attractions combine to nourish the mind, body and spirit. And like any park resource, the preservation of cultural resources requires ongoing care. As conscientious stewards, the Department needs to regularly inspect, maintain, assess the value of, and design programs for the best of its historic buildings and archaeological sites, just as it does for its other facilities such as playgrounds, ball fields, nature centers, and trails.

The Plan assumes that the majority of funding for improved cultural resource stewardship will come in the following ways:

- Through public/private partnerships between M-NCPPC and other entities;
- From increases in Historic Preservation's operating budget, based on Planning Board and County Council approval of the fiscal recommendations of this Plan;
- Through investigation into outside funding sources and alternative financing tools such as an M-NCPPC-originated historic trust. Such a trust could operate as a 501(c)(3) organization. (See Appendix G.)

1.1 Strategic Plan Purpose and Concepts

The purpose of the Strategic Plan for Cultural Resources in Parks is to create a blueprint for the future use and priority of these County-owned resources. This Strategic Plan:

- Lays out a vision for improving the stewardship of park-based cultural resources and establishes priorities.
- Recommends a new way of thinking about and prioritizing cultural resources in parks based on their potential for: long-term reuse and heritage tourism, plus their current condition.
- Presents a "Top 20" priority projects list containing sites to be opened to the public by M-NCPPC or put into use by means of a public/private partnership.
- Defines a systematic approach to stewarding cultural resources in parks based on capital improvements, annual maintenance, and programming (both activity/use/interpretive programming and architectural & engineering programming).
- Provides a better method for assessing maintenance costs of cultural resources in parks by developing new mathematical formulas.

- Increases agency knowledge about park-owned cultural resources by creating a new GIS park layer with extensive Excel spreadsheet and by sharing that data with SmartParks.
- Recommends a fully integrated approach to protecting cultural resources in parks that crosses over Department divisions. The Historic Preservation Section staff (hereinafter “staff”) recommends that closer working relationships be established with the Park Development Division in implementing CIP projects, the Central Maintenance and Property Management Divisions in executing CIP and PLAR-funded repair/rehab projects, and the Legacy Open Space and Enterprise Divisions in acquiring historic resources.
- Lays the groundwork for ongoing strategic plans that will protect cultural resources by virtue of the fact that a new plan will be developed every ten years, modeled after this Plan.

1.2 A New Era in Park Cultural Resource Management

The new era envisioned by this Plan is suggested by its title: “From Artifact to Attraction.” It is time to move beyond stabilization, which has been the necessary effort that has characterized the Department’s cultural resource stewardship for the past 15 years. It is time to move into an era of rehabilitation and use. Whereas an artifact is an object of study, a precious remnant of an earlier time, an “attraction” is something full of exciting possibilities for the present. An “attraction” can be a 19th-century farmhouse rehabilitated for a ‘caretaker’ family or a great stone barn restored as a regional visitor’s center. Rehabilitating and interpreting historic resources--using them to tell the County’s history-- turns an artifact into an attraction, generating educational, cultural, social, and economic opportunities.

While all the cultural resource properties are worthy of protection, a number can be transformed into attractions because of their potential for adaptive reuse and/or heritage tourism. Heritage tourism has been demonstrated to be good business. Data collected by the Maryland Heritage Area Program testifies to a direct correlation between heritage investment and economic gain. For example, Baltimore City reports a return of \$27.35 for every dollar it spends on tourism development. Moreover, every \$1 invested in Maryland’s Certified Heritage Areas leverages \$4.61 in *annual, ongoing* state and local tax revenues, according to *Investing in Our Communities: Maryland’s Heritage Area Program*, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (November 2003).

Transforming an artifact to an attraction can be done solely by M-NCPPC when appropriate or through public/private partnerships with citizens, organizations, or historic preservation groups, some of which have been working actively for decades to preserve park resources. Such critical private, non-profit preservation groups include, but are not limited to: Historic Medley District, Inc.; Montgomery Preservation, Inc.; the Montgomery Historical Society; Friends of Oakley Cabin; and Friends of the Agricultural History Farm Park.

To give the heritage effort even more emphasis in the past few years, the Department has been:

- Working hand-in-hand with the Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County (also known as Heritage Montgomery) to increase the County's heritage tourism market.
- Conducting interpretive programming and opening more buildings to the public.
- Generating more Requests for Proposals for public/private partnerships.
- Assigning an Enterprise Division staff member specifically to market park properties.

The more buildings restored and activated, the more the Department can realize its public mission and this Plan's vision: one of families picking pumpkins at an historic farm in the fall; bicyclists stopping for lunch at a turn-of-the-century general store; school groups visiting a working farm to understand 19th-century life; merchants operating stores or restaurants in historic buildings; in sum, a park system that attracts visitors from throughout the region to experience its rich cultural resources. Experiencing cultural resources as attractions starts with common sense planning and the data that supports it. Beyond acquisition, the three main components of stewardship of park-owned historic resources are:

- The Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- Annual Maintenance
- Programming (both activity and/or interpretive programming to assign use and architectural/engineering programming to develop specifications for that use).

1.3 Capital Improvements

CIP money is critical to bringing historic structures back to life. The CIP dollars projected for cultural resources from FY06 through FY12 equal \$2,472,000. Some of these funds are earmarked for what this Plan has identified as the Top 20 priority projects, resulting in a total of \$2,024,000. Other CIP funds pertain to strategic planning or to other properties like Needwood Mansion. **Note: This Plan does not seek additional CIP funding at present.**

This Plan should result, however, in pinpointed CIP assessments for the future. If the recommendations in the Plan are followed--namely, improving building inspections, and undertaking cost analysis reports and/or Historic Structure Reports for the most important buildings--future CIP fund requests may reflect an increased need based on that data. This would be reflected in CIP requests for fiscal years 2008-2014, the next budget cycle.

In order to better manage capital improvement projects affecting cultural resources, this Plan has assigned CIP and annual maintenance responsibility for cultural resources to a "Responsible Party" as a means to creating stronger agency efficiency. The Plan assigns one or more divisions to one and/or two related categories: as a "Responsible Party-Inspection" and/or as "Responsible Party-Funding. In other words, it may be the Park Manager's task to inspect a group of buildings on any given day, but it may be Central Maintenance's responsibility to spend the money to rehabilitate the buildings. (Note: The Parks Department, even if not assigned as a Responsible Party-Funding, does regularly invest in historic properties by maintaining the grounds surrounding them.)

These Responsible Parties are identified on the spreadsheets at the end of this document and on the Top 20 Priority Projects inventory sheets in the middle of this Plan. These assignments have been coordinated with the various divisions of the Department, in order to reach consensus. With designated Responsible Parties, buildings will not “fall through the cracks” in terms of major expenditures or routine maintenance.

1.4 Annual Maintenance

Beyond capital improvements, annual maintenance is the key to preserving the county’s large building stock. The Department’s annual maintenance budget for historic resources is presently zero, save for emergency repair work. This situation is highly problematic and will not ensure the buildings’ preservation or utilization as attractions. **Note: This Plan seeks \$400,000 in the FY07 operating budget so that the Historic Preservation Section can manage a new Cultural Resource in Parks Maintenance Program (CRPMP). This program should be funded annually. This request is based on actual maintenance calculations. (See bullets below.)**

For annual maintenance, this Plan does the following:

- Establishes a formula for estimating the annual maintenance of historic properties by first assigning buildings an “Estimated Value.” See Table 4-4.
- Establishes a second formula, also explained in Table 4-4, which results in an “Annual Maintenance” dollar figure for each resource.
- Calculates average annual maintenance for cultural resources in parks. See Tables 4-5 and 4-6. The total annual maintenance request for all Top 20 properties equals \$375,250. The total annual maintenance request for all other major cultural resources equals \$146,314. Taken together, these combined totals account for \$521,572 per year in estimated annual maintenance needs, thus resulting in a conservative \$400,000 FY07 annual request (and ongoing annual requests of the same amount).
- Uses the Responsible Party-Funding category to assign a lead division to carry out annual maintenance work at each of the properties. That party can then use the “charge back” option to draw money from Historic Preservation’s proposed operating budget for the Cultural Resources in Parks Maintenance Program.

1.5 Programming

The third component of stewardship relates to costs associated with programming, a two-step process involving:

- Activity/Use or Interpretive Programming: for example, creating an experiential museum or determining that a bed-and-breakfast is as an appropriate use.
- Architectural and Engineering Programming: developing plans and specifications tied to an appropriate building use.

Some of the programming ideas that can be used for historic buildings/sites or are already on the rise in the County include:

- Agri-tourism (orchards, pick-your-own, mazes, family farming experience)
- Archaeological education
- Equestrian facilities
- Lodging and dining (B&Bs, inns, restaurants)
- Institutional, corporate and/or university uses
- Mercantile venues (antiques, country stores)
- The arts (exhibition space, loft living, community theater)
- Natural-resource-based activities such as camping, fishing, bird watching, kayaking
- Elder hostels/activities
- National Heritage Corridors

The current programming process for cultural resources, both from an activity and architectural and engineering standpoint, calls out for improvement. Activity programming is presently managed by different departments within the Department (Enterprise, Park Managers, Historic Preservation, etc.) sometimes resulting in a lack of coherence. Historical interpretive programming is directed by one paid staff person (a 30-hour-per-week Education and Outreach Planner). This task deserves a larger work force. The following list points out how other counties compare:

- Prince George's County has nine, full-time personnel (six museum managers and three historic specialists) at six house museums, and an aviation museum with five staff members. The County has an Exhibit Specialist who provides support, exhibits and graphics to museums. It also has its own Historic Facilities Maintenance Section, with at least six positions set aside for maintenance workers devoted to historic structures. (See Appendix L: Information from Prince George's County, "Natural and Historical Resources Division, Career Staff Organizational Chart – August 2003.)
- Fairfax County operates a mixed-use park (a complex that has both historic and recreational elements) called Frying Pan/Kidwell Farm with over 23 staff people; Historic Sully with eight full-time staff and seven "seasonal" staff (11 months on and 1 month off); and Colvin Run Mill with seven full-time staff and three seasonal staff. Fairfax also has nine adaptive-reuse historic structures that are used for private and corporate events that are managed by a central property management office with seven full-time staff and up to nine seasonal staff.
- Harford County has 20 paid staff spread throughout properties that are open to the public in one way or another, including: Edgely Grove, the Scott House, Liriodendron, and the Hays-Heighe House.
- Frederick County has one full time museum manager at Rose Hill Manor and 18 part-time staff relating to interpretive programming.
- Carroll County has 10 full-time employees, two part-time employees, and six summer contractual employees at its Carroll County Farm Museum alone.

- Howard County has one full-time historic sites coordinator who organizes the Ellicott City Consortium, two part-time people interpreting the most popular historic site, and two more positions slated to be added next year.
- Calvert County pays one full-time person at Linden, a homestead property; this person also acts as the executive director of the Calvert County Historical Society.

Architectural and engineering programming also could be greatly improved by taking steps outlined in this Plan. Today, A/E programming often lags behind a first-stage stabilization or more modest repair project that is necessary just to keep a building standing.

To address programming concerns strategically, this Plan recommends the following actions, each of which is codified in the spreadsheets that reflect the new cultural resources in parks database:

- Designates a Long-Term Use Goal for each resource.
- Assigns each resource a Heritage Theme.
- Categorizes each resource under an International Building Code Future Use and Occupancy (IBCFUO) classification that creates a starting point for architectural and engineering programming.

While the IBCFUO classification indicates a starting point for rehabilitation planning, M-NCPPC should entertain opportunities for rehabilitation that may differ from what is proposed in this Plan. Once a use and occupancy has been established for a historic building, it is essential that the Maryland Building Rehabilitation Code (Smart Codes) be used in connection with the International Building Code and/or International Residential Code to ensure that historic character is not lost during rehabilitation.

This Plan stops short of assessing two programming items: 1) the full financial impact of operating funds associated with programming activities and 2) architectural and engineering fees associated with designing and laying out the building's spaces and upgrading infrastructure to code. This Plan cannot make these financial assumptions for two reasons: 1) such financial estimates require detailed scopes of work prepared by an historical architect and 2) the particulars of building usage, such as limited-part time use versus full-time use, are not yet known for many building. This level of detail is appropriately determined in individual feasibility studies, not in strategic plans.

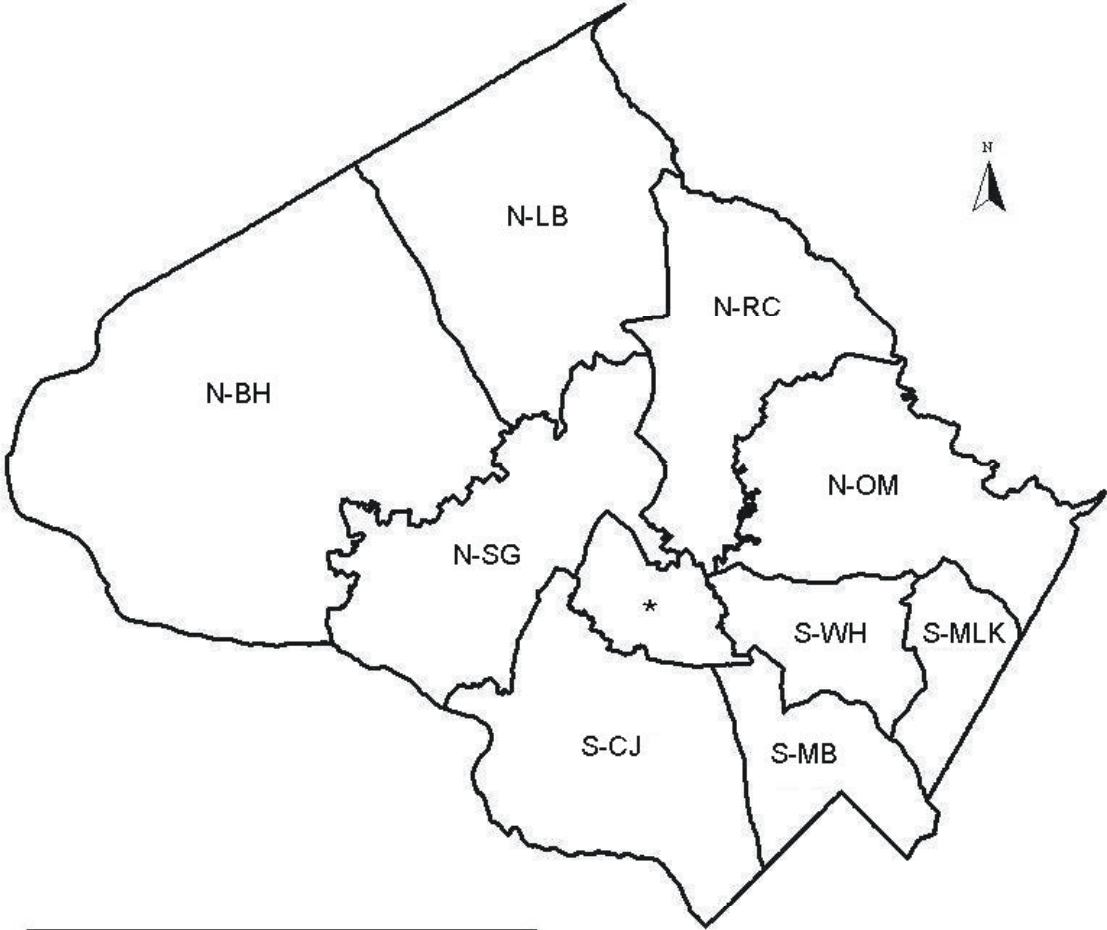
1.6 Measuring Success

Success in achieving the “Artifact-to-Attraction” vision laid out in this Strategic Plan should be measured by the following milestones:

- The “Top 20” priority projects identified in this Plan are rehabilitated or on their way to being rehabilitated/put to active use by 2016, the 10-year mark.
- More historic buildings are open to the public and staffed by paid professionals.

- Annual maintenance of Department-owned historic buildings is done on a regular schedule and is fully funded.
- More “caretakers” (those who maintain property in lieu of paying rent) and private partners assume the role of maintaining historic properties in parks.
- Increased interpretive/use programming and signage of historic resources in parks is funded, resulting in quantifiable increases in heritage tourism visits.
- Community identity and satisfaction increases in areas near programmed and rehabilitated--as opposed to vacant or underutilized--buildings.
- More archaeological sites are listed in the state’s inventory, *The Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, and the National Register of Historic Places.
- Data on historic buildings and archaeological sites is more readily available to all Department divisions via GIS and SmartParks.

Montgomery County, Maryland Park Maintenance Regions



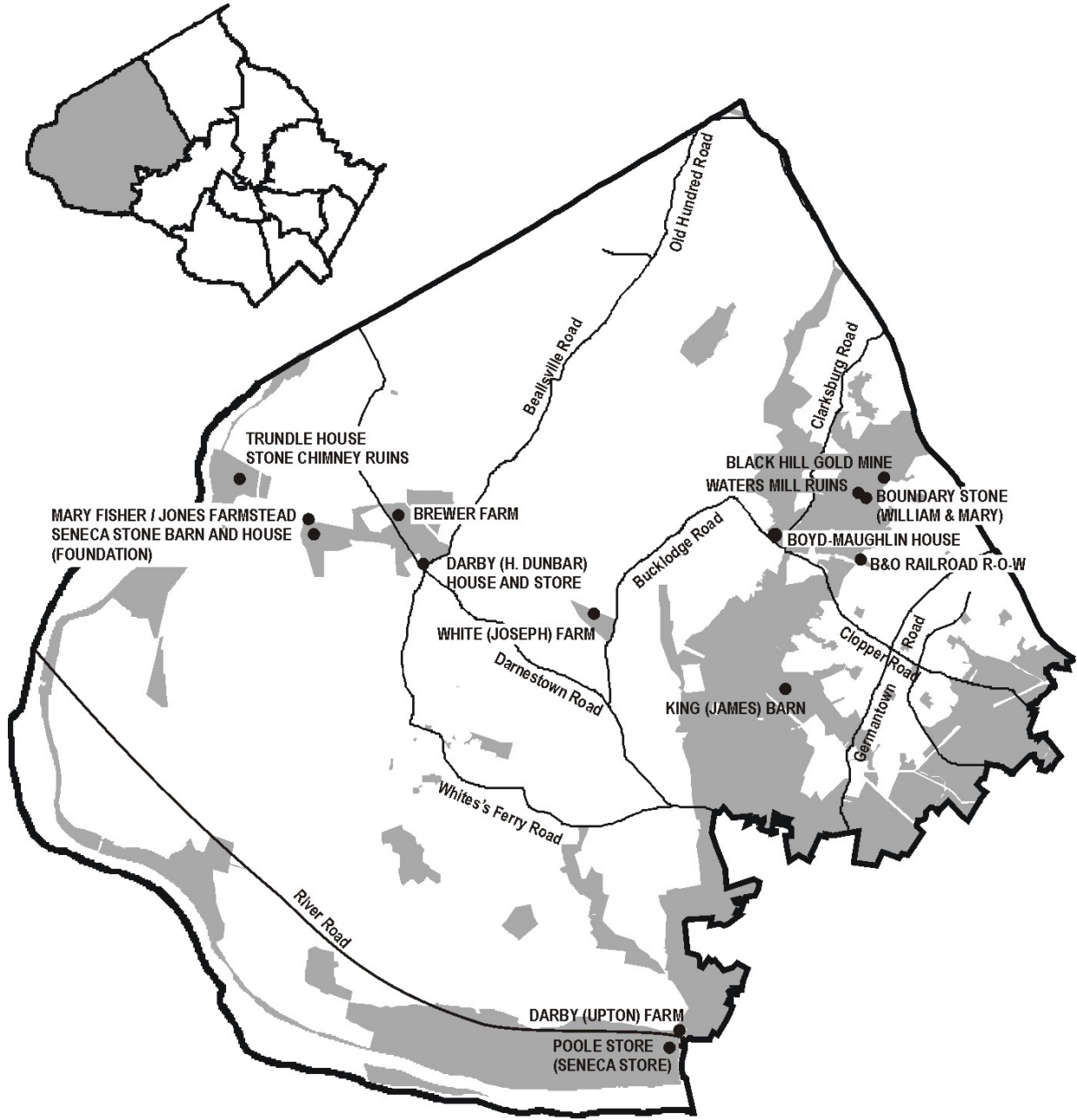
| Park Maintenance Regions Key | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| <i>North</i> | | <i>South</i> | |
| LB | Little Bennett | WH | Wheaton |
| RC | Rock Creek | MLK | Martin Luther King, Jr. |
| BH | Black Hill | CJ | Cabin John |
| SG | Shady Grove | MB | Meadowbrook |
| OM | Olney Manor | | |

* Independent Planning Area, City of Rockville



Cultural Resources in Parks

Black Hills Maintenance Region



 Parkland

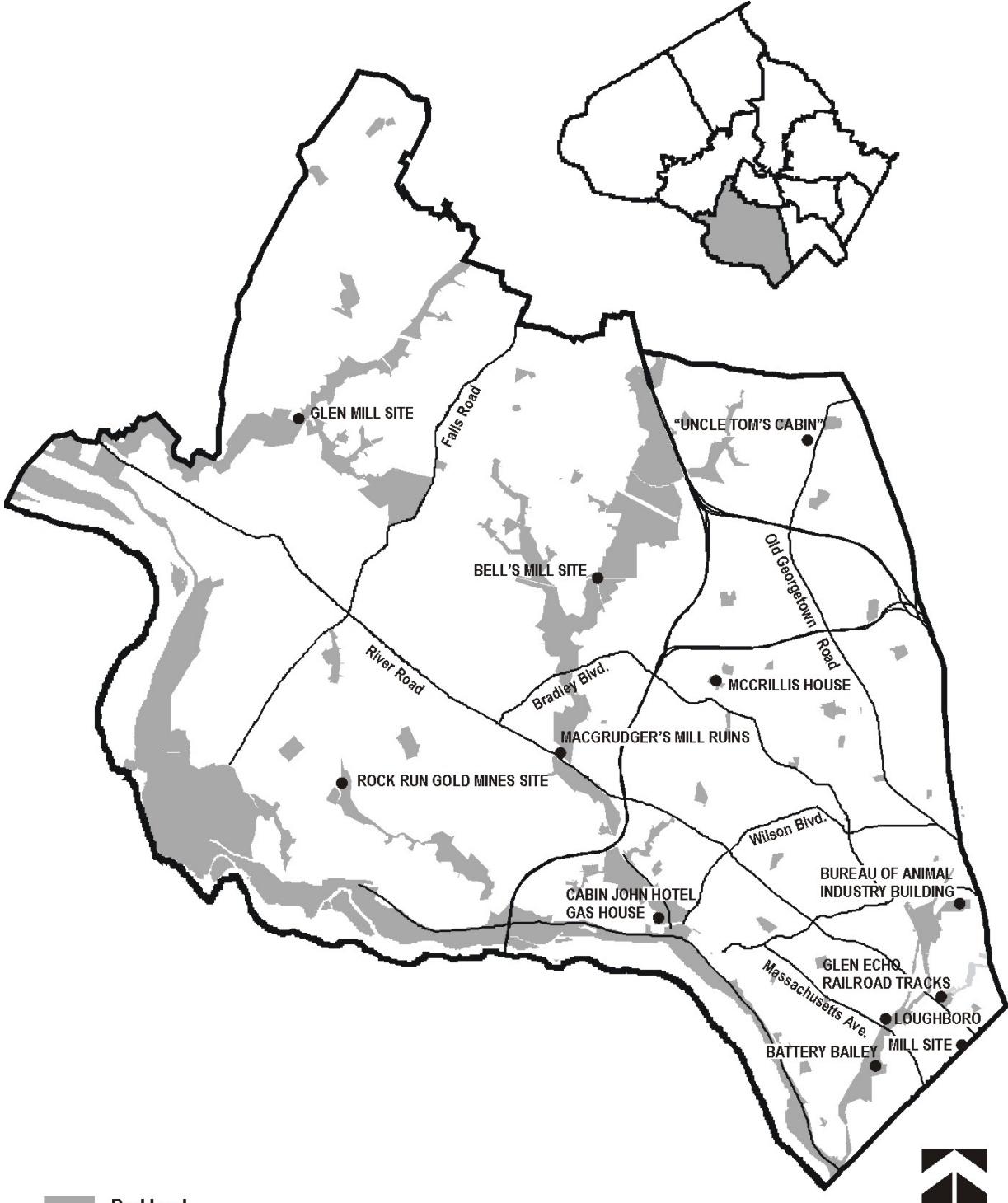
 Park Owned Historic Sites



Not to Scale

Cultural Resources in Parks

Cabin John Maintenance Region



■ Parkland

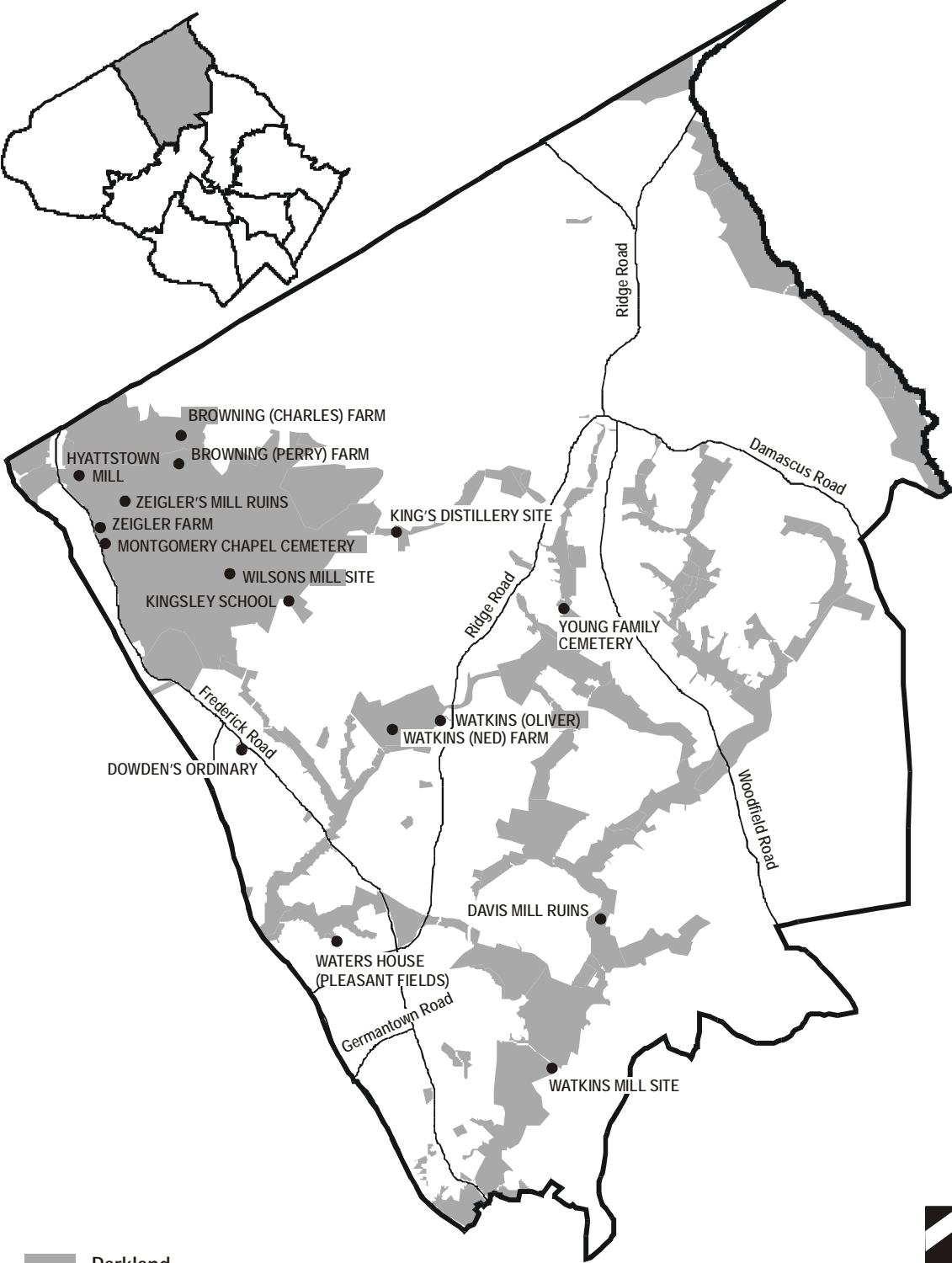
● Park Owned Historic Sites



Not to Scale

Cultural Resources in Parks

Little Bennett Maintenance Region



- Parkland
- Park Owned Historic Sites



Not to Scale

Cultural Resources in Park Meadowbrook Maintenance Region



■ Parkland

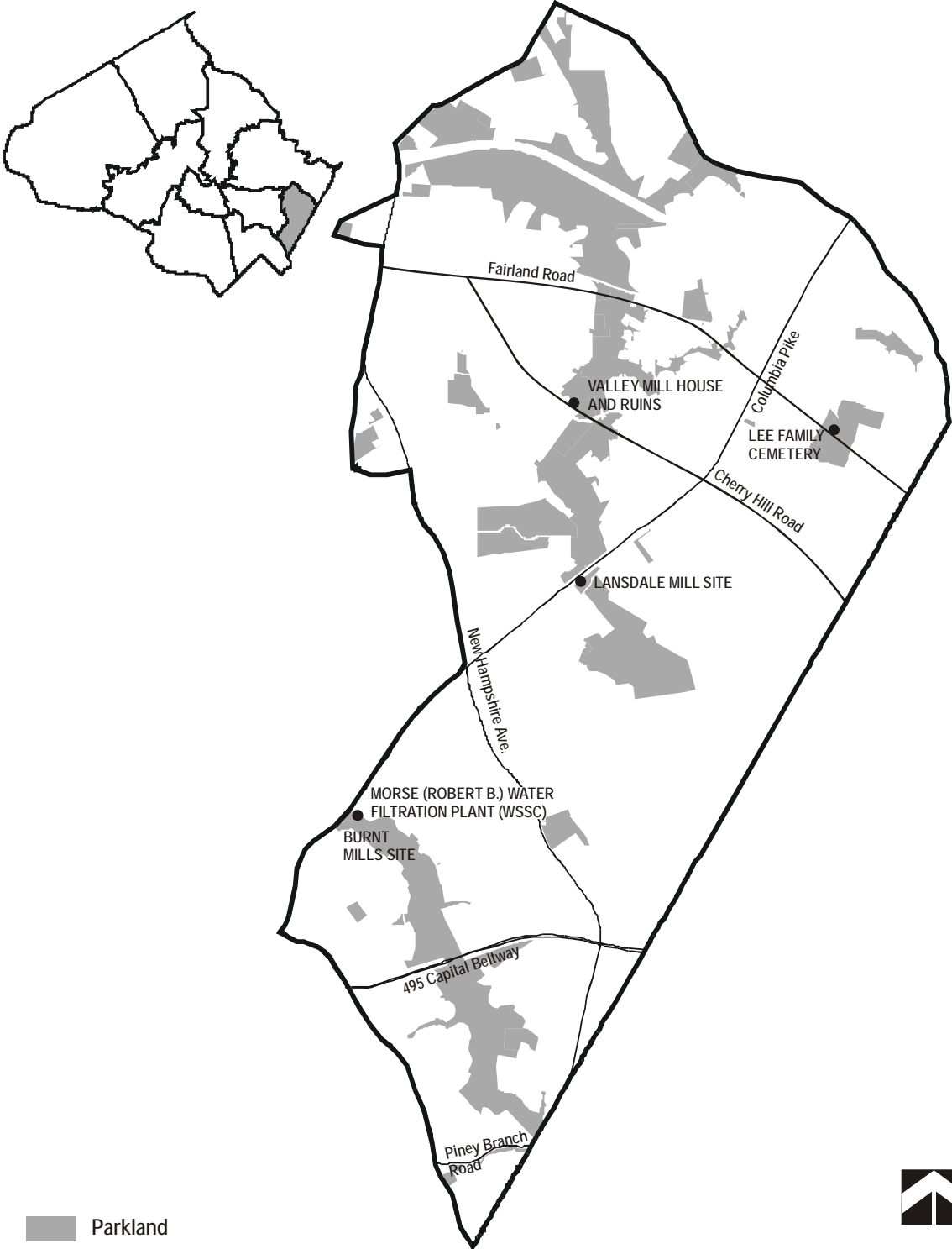
● Park Owned Historic Sites



Not to Scale

Cultural Resources in Parks

Martin Luther King Jr. Maintenance Region



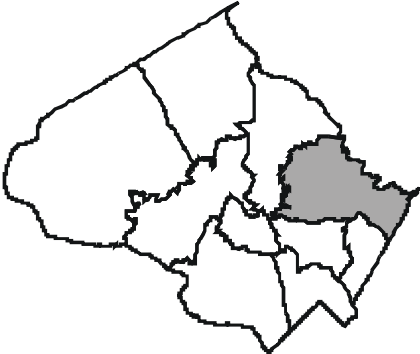
- Parkland
- Park Owned Historic Sites



Not to Scale

Cultural Resources in Parks

Olney Manor Maintenance Region



■ Parkland

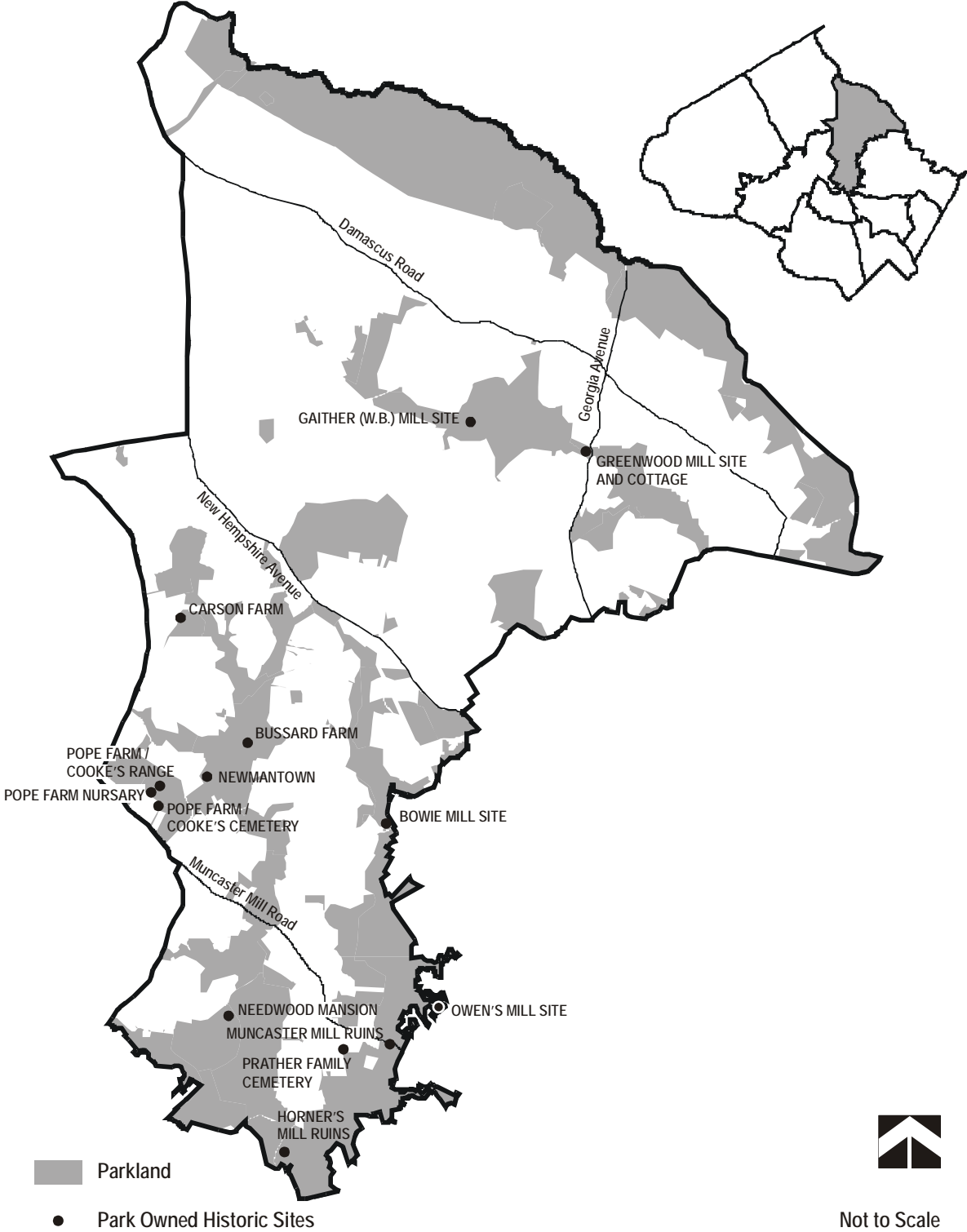
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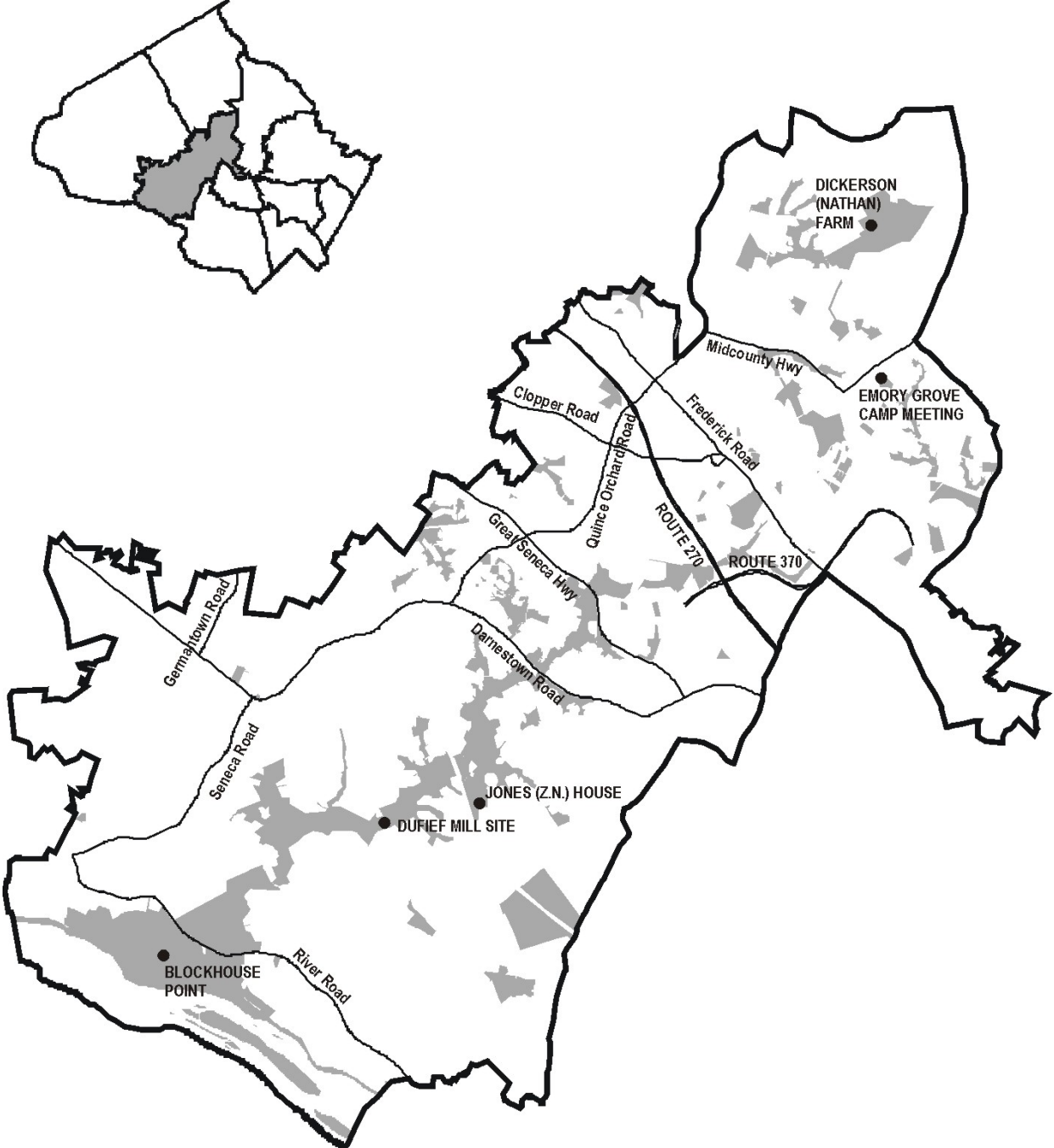
Cultural Resources in Parks

Rock Creek Maintenance Region



Cultural Resources in Parks

Shady Grove Maintenance Region



- Parkland
- Park Owned Historic Sites



Not to Scale

Cultural Resources in Parks

Wheaton Maintenance Region



■ Parkland

● Park Owned Historic Sites



Not to Scale