

CHAPTER SIX

RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

GOAL: *To promote participation by all Rockville citizens in diverse, interesting and high quality recreational and leisure opportunities in safe, modern and well-maintained parks and facilities.*

POLICIES

1. Provide high quality, accessible and affordable recreation and cultural services including the following areas: parks, facilities, programs, environment, urban forestry and special events.
2. Ensure that sufficient indoor and outdoor facilities are available to meet the space needs for recreation, arts and community programming.
3. Provide an exemplary park system that exceeds national acreage standards and offers a diversity of geographically distributed facilities and amenities.
4. Offer diverse recreational, educational, social, cultural and community activities for all ages with quality leadership in safe, pleasant environments.
5. Undertake ongoing planning and development functions.
6. Pursue opportunities for partnerships in all service areas.

INTRODUCTION

This section of the Master Plan outlines strategies for the future development of recreation and parks resources in the City of Rockville. It assesses the adequacy of parks and open space, leisure facilities, programs and services based on input from the community and staff and presents recommendations for future service delivery. Social, economic, cultural and leisure trends are discussed, along with broader citywide initiatives such as community involvement, environmental protection and technology.

It is widely recognized that parks and recreation systems make an essential contribution to quality of life. Recreation and parks services play an important role in helping Rockville sustain the quality of life that residents appreciate and support. This quality of life includes living in safe communities with access to parks and facilities that encourage healthier lives and healthier communities and involves all age segments in positive leisure time activities.

Social/Cultural Factors

Rockville's demographic composition is changing. The community is becoming more ethnically diversified, the population is aging, and more elderly are choosing to remain in the City. Diversity has implications for recreation and parks services since participation patterns are influenced by cultural preferences and awareness of services. As the primary language of more and more Rockville residents is not English, the need to publish marketing and promotional materials in a number of languages must be considered.

As the “baby boomers” reach retirement age, the City will be asked to provide expanded services for seniors. Our aging population will now be composed of three segments: active and employed baby boomers, active retirees and frail elderly. Each will have different demands for services.

Although the City is following national aging patterns, 25% of Rockville’s population is below age 17, and approximately 21% of children less than 14 years of age in Montgomery County are “latchkey kids.” Recreation programs can play an important role in helping youth to make the best of their non-school hours. Programming that responds to the needs of male and female children of all ages will be critical.

Rockville is in a dramatic growth period as the King Farm and Fallsgrove developments will add approximately 10,500 new residents who will have a substantial impact on the demand for services. Construction of several new office buildings and commercial developments are increasing the number of people who work and participate in recreation in Rockville.

Leisure Trends

Walking continues to be the most popular leisure activity in America, and Rockville’s trail system offers residents more than 50 miles of paved walkways. Based on information from the



Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, the most popular youth and adult sports are soccer, golf, basketball, in-line skating, roller hockey and softball. Soccer is the leading team sports market growth segment. But, total attendance at arts events in the U.S. is greater than total attendance at sports events.

Title IX has had dramatic effects on programming decisions and participation. Females have become a far larger part of the sports market and are finding their way into formerly male-dominated sports, such as youth baseball and basketball. The result has been a dramatic increase in recreation interests and a near doubling of demand for certain facilities. Since 1987, female participation in fitness activities has risen 23%, in team sports 21%, individual sports 22%, and other activities 18%. Six of the top ten sports and recreation activities among women are fitness-related. Recreation and Parks staff constantly monitor participation trends and offer programs for males and females in response to interest.

Americans spend more time at work than their counterparts in most other countries. The recreation industry must adjust by tailoring programs and activities to accommodate the busy schedules of individuals and families. With many two-earner households, parents and children place a greater premium on constructive and fun recreation programs that also serve a childcare function.

Economic Factors

Recreation and parks provide many economic benefits to a community. Recent studies have indicated that park and recreation facilities contribute to a local economy by appreciating

land values and stimulating private investment and tourism growth. Land values are enhanced the closer a property is to park and recreation facilities. In addition, arts offerings and special events, such as Hometown Holidays, generate significant positive economic impact in the community.

Fee-based recreation programming is a national trend that has affected Rockville. However, the City continues to strive to offer a core of low-cost or free programming, facilities and events, recognizing that residents should receive services for their property taxes. Although the nation experienced an unprecedented economic boom during the 1990s, many low-income households remain in Rockville. Reducing financial constraints is important to ensuring that programs and services are accessible to all residents.

As resources are constrained, many municipalities are entering into successful partnerships. Examples include partnerships with hospitals for fitness classes, community sports clubs for field development, businesses for tournament sponsorship, environmental groups for land acquisition, and corporate sponsorship of arts-related projects and special events. Rockville's relationship with the Montgomery County Public School system is a positive example of a valuable and supportive partnership.

Land Availability

The available land within the City is being developed or committed for development. As a result, there is limited opportunity to expand the parks and open space system. The remaining large tracts of land are held in private ownership (Woodmont and Lakewood Golf Courses).

Environmental Protection

Concern for protecting and improving the environment is an important issue nationwide and of great interest to Rockville residents. *Environmental Guidelines* were adopted by the City in 1999 which serve to protect the environment during development activities. Application of these *Guidelines* and other environmental policies and laws will continue to be important to Rockville residents and business owners.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The City has an extensive supply of parks, recreation facilities, and programs that contribute positively to residents' satisfaction with living in the community. The level and quality of provision exceeds national standards and has been recognized both nationally and internationally with awards such as the National Recreation and Parks Association's Gold Medal, Nations in Bloom, and numerous others.

Parks and Open Space System

There are 935 acres of parkland, grounds and forests at 58 sites, 118 acres of right-of-way, 22,000 street trees, as well as 65 municipal buildings and park shelters within Rockville. A chart showing the facilities at each site and a map of their location is included in this chapter.

Parks and recreation facilities in Rockville are often mentioned when individuals comment about the positive quality of life in the City. Currently, there are 18 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Approximately 50 percent are developed as active-use parkland; the remainder is in a natural state. The City system is generally regarded as excellent; however, demand for recreation services has increased beyond the availability of facilities for programming. The challenge for Rockville's future is to maintain the high level of service and facilities and a desirable balance of active parkland and passive open space.

Parks traditionally fall into three basic categories: active parkland, which contains recreation facilities; passive parkland, which includes open space for general public use; and natural areas, which preserve environmental features such as stream valleys and forested areas. A well-rounded system of public parkland, recreation, and open space areas includes a variety of facilities, which may include one or more facilities in these categories. The traditional park classification system defines parks facilities further, and includes the following designations: Neighborhood Parks, Athletic Parks, Community Center Parks, Stream Valley Parks, Forest Preserves, Garden/Passive Parks, and Bikeways. The City's park system contains each of these different types of parks. Although each type is designed with specific goals and users in mind, the overall goal is to ensure that some type of park or recreational facility is within one-quarter mile of every City resident.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS provide recreational areas and passive open space within easy walking or cycling of each resident in the community. These typically include tot lots and/or playgrounds with equipment for elementary-age children. In some locations, neighborhood parks also include ballfields, tennis courts, basketball courts, picnic areas, shelters with restrooms, and other recreational amenities.

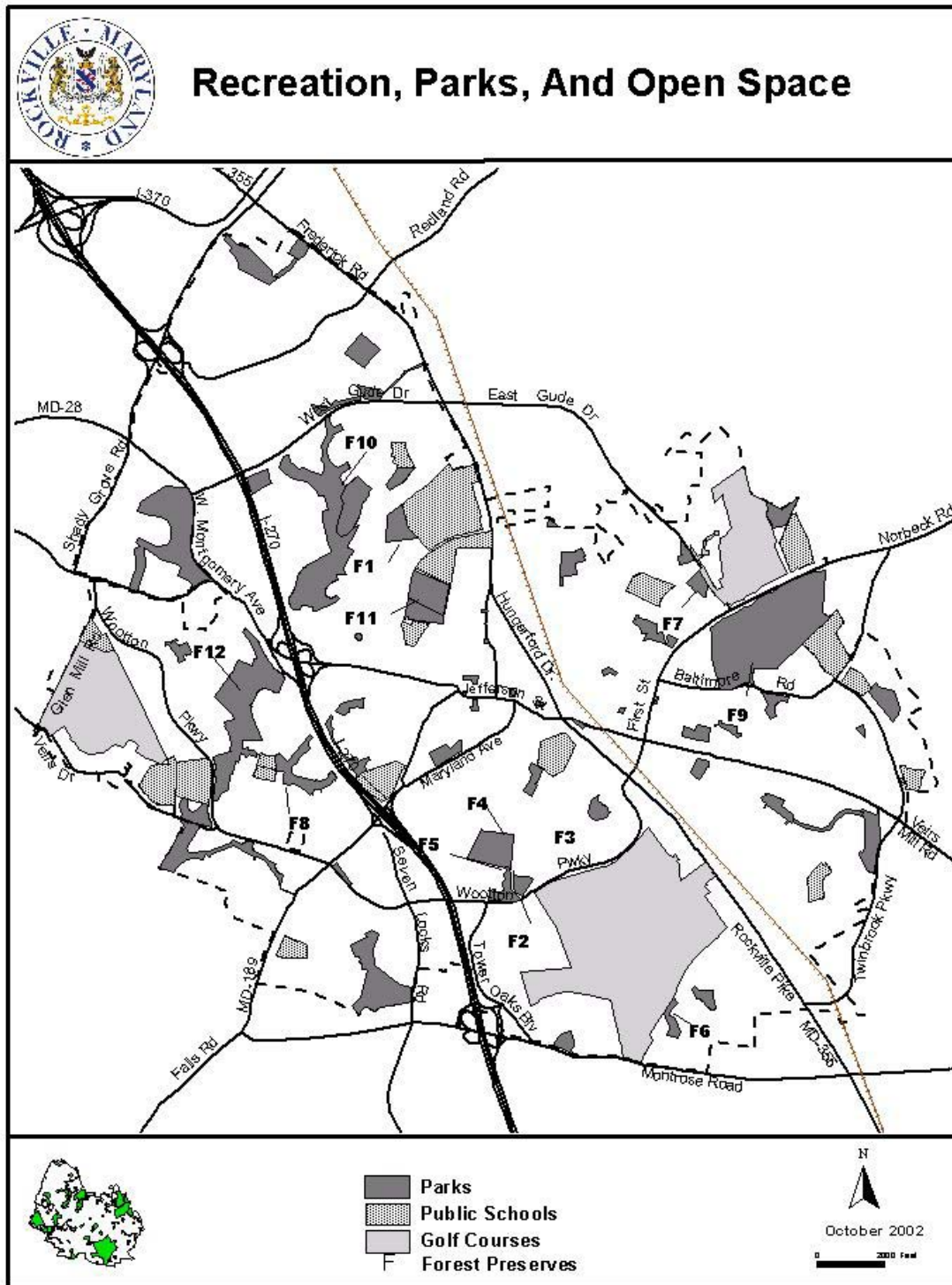
ATHLETIC PARKS provide areas for team sports, pickup sports games, and large group activities, and also serve as neighborhood parks. It is advisable to locate multiple playing fields on large sites that are physically removed or suitably buffered from nearby homes to minimize disruption to a neighborhood because of field lighting, game duration, spectator volume and other considerations.

COMMUNITY CENTER PARKS include facilities with indoor multi-purpose programming rooms, game rooms, craft rooms, dance and exercise rooms. Some community centers also include gymnasiums with basketball and indoor volleyball courts, computer labs, and other neighborhood park facilities.



STREAM VALLEY PARKS include areas along Watts Branch, Cabin John and Rock Creek and their tributaries. Stream valley parks have many public and environmental benefits such as flood and erosion control, enhancements to water quality, wildlife habitat, and the preservation of scenic and open spaces. The City's policy is to preserve these areas as passive open space parkland.

FOREST PRESERVES are parks that the Mayor and Council have designated to protect stands of indigenous trees and shrubs. Twelve preserves have been designated to protect these significant natural resources in stream valleys and other areas.



GARDEN/PASSIVE PARKS are small green spaces that may have a quiet seating area, a garden and perhaps a pleasing view. As areas of the City become more urban in character, access to these spaces will be critical for residents.

BIKEWAYS provide access to schools, libraries, parks, commercial areas, public transportation and links to regional bike facilities. The system consists of designated on- and off-road bike paths fostering a bicycle friendly community in which recreational bicycling is a comfortable alternative to other modes of transportation.



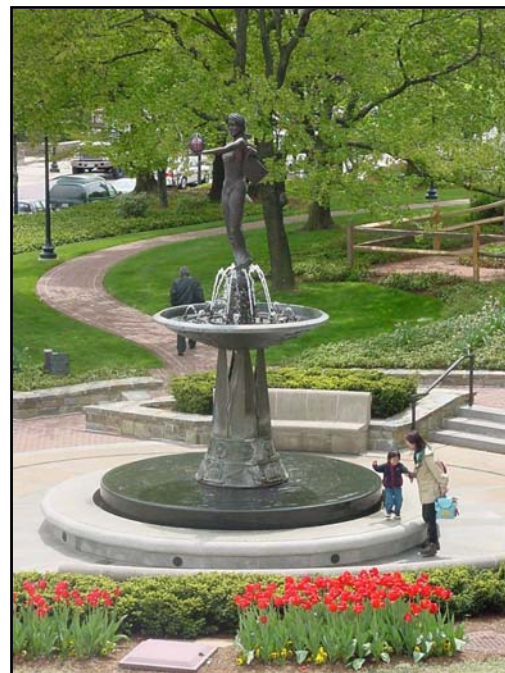
Bike Route Logo

CRITICAL ISSUES

Parkland Acquisition

As more parcels are developed in Rockville, it is very important that the City identify all possible ways to preserve open space. All undeveloped parcels within existing neighborhoods should be evaluated for parkland acquisition before they are developed as infill. This is especially critical in the City's older established neighborhoods in order to increase the amount of park land in these communities. The City's policy of designating 20% of land that is about to be developed as part of a comprehensive planned development to be reserved as parkland should be formalized. This policy maintains the desired amount of parkland and will be important if any of the large golf courses are developed. The inclusion of stream valleys and their forested buffers is of particular importance as is land that can be used for active recreation.

Many communities require developers to pay a "payment-in-lieu" fee to the public park system in cases where it is not possible or feasible for a land dedication to be made. A threshold amount would be 5% of the total value of the land being developed. This is generally a last-resort option; however, consideration should be given to adopting such a requirement to apply only in cases where dedication is not practical or feasible. Another option would be to require all redevelopment of office or commercial properties (including major additions) to pay the fee. In this case, the fee could be tied into the value of the addition instead of the land. Funds could be used for parkland acquisition, special



refurbishing projects in existing parks (not ordinary maintenance), or enhancing wildlife and forest preserves.

Urban Park Classification

As Rockville evolves into more of an urban city, this new park classification should be created to describe green spaces, plazas and other public open spaces in areas such as the Town Center. These areas may also need different or more intensive maintenance considerations than typical green spaces.

Trail and Greenway Connections

Rockville's bikeway, trail system, and stream valley parks are connected at many points to regional systems. Completing all appropriate connections should be a priority to improve convenience and usability for citizens. An inter-connected system of greenways, which may include trail corridors or natural areas such as stream valleys, is also very important for wildlife habitat as well as for human uses.

Balance of Passive and Active Parks

The current near 50-50 balance between passive open space and active park areas with recreational amenities should be maintained as the park system is expanded.

Recommendations

1. Continue to preserve, protect and provide high quality maintenance for City parks, grounds, forests and facilities.
2. Continue to implement the coordinated Bikeway Master Plan.
3. Continue to exceed the national parkland provision standard by maintaining 18 acres/1,000 population.
4. Require allocation of a minimum of 20% of development area for parkland. The requirement should provide appropriate payment-in-lieu only if the allocation of parkland is not feasible or desirable.
5. Prepare a Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) plan for all major developments and redevelopments. Open space and recreational amenities must be provided commensurate with the scale of the proposed development.
6. Maintain a balance between the development of parkland for active uses and the preservation of natural open space and stream valley systems.
7. Pursue parkland acquisition with emphasis on acquisition of parcels that are contiguous with existing parkland, forested, or otherwise environmentally sensitive.
8. Establish an Urban Park category within the park classification system.
9. Accomplish watershed management within parks without serious compromise to existing recreational amenities and other environmental priorities such as forest retention whenever possible.
10. Continue to employ current technology and environmentally sensitive practices in park maintenance.
11. Promote environmental awareness, education, stewardship, preservation, and the value of parks as natural resources.

12. Seek opportunities to acquire land and create mini-parks to serve as green oases, particularly within neighborhoods or other areas where adequate parkland does not exist or in areas where these types of facilities are not present.
13. Promote tolerance and coexistence in all wildlife policies.
14. Exceed the minimum standards in the *Environmental Guidelines* where possible.
15. Consider environmental priorities in park and facility development and redevelopment planning.
16. Acquire parkland to meet the goal of providing a park within safe walking distance of every resident.
17. Develop master plans for each park to guide long range park planning.
18. Connect future parks, wherever possible, with existing local and regional park systems to provide continuous greenways for wildlife habitat, hiking, biking and other activities.

URBAN FORESTRY PROGRAM

The urban forest includes all of the trees that line the 500+ streets in Rockville, park trees, and all the trees located within forested stream valleys. It also includes trees on residential and commercial lands, in common areas within neighborhoods, on stormwater management areas, in cemeteries, etc.

During the last decade the City has adopted a number of policy documents related to the protection and enhancement of the Rockville urban forest. These are described in an appendix, but are listed below:

- *Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance (FTPO)*
- *Master Street Tree Plan (MSTP)*
- *Environmental Guidelines (EGs)*
- *Gypsy Moth Suppression Program*
- *Urban Forest Management Policies*

Rockville's urban forest is classified in four general categories: street trees, forested park land, non-forested park land, and the private urban forest. The first three categories are managed by the Recreation and Parks Department.

Street Trees

Approximately 22,000 trees line Rockville's roads, parkways and boulevards. The Forestry Division of the Recreation and Parks Department maintains the street trees under a permit from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources-Forestry Service. This includes regular pruning as well as replacing of dead or hazardous trees. After any removal, street trees are re-planted with the species designated in the Master Street Tree Plan. Homeowner associations maintain trees on private streets. The Mayor and Council, Potomac Electric Power Company, and Verizon have entered into an agreement whereby the City receives advanced notification when the utility companies are performing routine tree pruning around their utility lines. This practice should be continued.

Forested Parkland

Forest areas dominate many of the City's parks and stream valleys. These areas have high environmental value and importance. The Mayor and Council have designated twelve Forest Preserves totaling 306.2 acres. The Forest Preserves may comprise an entire park area or only the forested portion.

Non-Forested Parkland

Non-forested parkland includes parks and facility grounds that have little or no contiguous forest cover. These properties, however, contain numerous mature and specimen trees, as well as landscaped areas that are an integral part of the urban forest.

Private Urban Forest

The private urban forest is made up of trees on residential lots, homeowners' association property, forest conservation easements, parking lots, commercial property, cemeteries and other non-public land. These trees are maintained and cared for through private entities; however, they are an important component of Rockville's urban forest.

Currently, residents within Historic Districts must receive permission from the City Forester to remove any trees on their property. Replacement trees are required when appropriate. Owners of commercial and industrial sites must acquire a permit prior to removing trees greater than 12 inches in diameter. The City will continue to monitor private urban forests to control invasive exotic plants and gypsy moth populations. Invasive exotic non-native plants are a problem because they eventually replace native species, changing the structure of natural plant and animal habitats.

Strategies for conservation and enhancement of the City's private urban forest resources should be explored. These strategies may include incentives for property owners to place private forested areas in forest conservation easements where none exist, as well as programs to assist property owners in creating treed and forested areas on their properties.

CRITICAL ISSUES

The City should continue to strive to sustain and increase its urban forest canopy. As described in this document's Environment Chapter, the nation's oldest non-profit conservation organization, American Forests, recommends an average 40% canopy cover for urban areas. This average can be achieved by having 15% coverage in downtown and industrial areas, 25% coverage in urban residential and light commercial areas, and 50% in suburban residential parkland areas. The current amount of forest canopy in Rockville is substantial but has not been measured precisely. Once it is known, an appropriate goal for canopy coverage should be established.

It is recognized that environmental and other community interests may sometimes conflict. In such cases, the planning process must balance the benefits and detriments to the environment with other community concerns. One example is the implementation of the City's

stormwater management program which seeks to improve water quality and slow downstream erosion by capturing untreated stormwater runoff from large drainage areas through carefully located public stormwater management facilities. Typically, regional facilities are located within stream valley buffers to maximize their effectiveness. When such a location is necessary, the precise placement and design of the facility should seek to minimize the impact on other natural resources such as the trees at the site.

Recommendations

1. Maintain, enhance and preserve the City's urban forest and establish a goal for canopy coverage.
2. Develop an Exotic and Invasive Plant Control Program
3. Develop a strategy for enhancing and expanding the City's Private Urban Forest.

RECREATION FACILITIES

The Guide to Parks and Facilities (p. 6-20) presents a complete listing of all City-owned recreation facilities. Residents are also well served by a number of private and regional recreational facilities including those operated by the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, Montgomery County, and the private sector (i.e., Rockville Arts Place, The Children's Musical Theatre Center, ARC IceSports, Rockville SportsPlex, and others).



Civic Center Complex

The Rockville Civic Center Complex is located in northeast Rockville, in one of the City's largest parks with a total of 153 acres, more than 100 of which are in a designated Forest Preserve. Facilities include the 25-room Glenview Mansion, formal gardens, lawn area, the 500-seat F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, playgrounds and tennis courts, a maintenance complex with 3 buildings, and several miles of woodland trails. The Croydon Creek Nature Center was constructed in the park in 2001. The complex attracts over 200,000 visitors each year to more than 1,100 events.

A Historic Master Plan for Glenview Mansion and its grounds has been completed and adopted. General issues to be addressed are the challenges inherent in balancing preservation concerns, facility needs, and operational goals including the support of an appropriate mix of uses. The art gallery and its associated programs are an important part of the Mansion's second floor. The City is also committed to continuing to provide affordable, quality, theatrical performing arts productions at the Fitzgerald Theatre. Located at the head of a woodland trail system that connects to Rock Creek Park, The Croydon Creek Nature Center offers nature interpretation programs in an urban forest setting and serves as a resource for students, teachers, and general residents.

The Rockville Climbing Gym is located at the Civic Center Park. Trained staff teach classes and supervise group uses for children through adults. This space needs to be regularly upgraded to remain challenging. The space both inside and outside the gym need to be renovated to appeal to its primary users.

Lincoln Park Community Center

Originally built in 1970, this community center serves as a resource and gathering location for the culturally diverse Lincoln Park community. The facility provides recreational, educational, social and cultural activities. Renovated in 2000, facilities include a computer lab, library, gymnasium, daycare/multipurpose room, fitness room, game room, kitchen, and Public Safety and Community Services annex. Future challenges will be to expand the programs to serve all ages, including the elderly, as well as to continue to upgrade the facility and to promote the Center.



Twinbrook Community Recreation Center

Located in Twinbrook Park, the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center opened in October 1999 and features a computer lab, fitness room, multi-purpose rooms, a full-sized gymnasium and a separate annex building. Drop-in use and a variety of recreational programs are offered, including classes, daycare, fitness, sports, family activities, and special events. The center serves as a gathering point for community meetings.

Neighborhood Community Recreation Centers

Several small centers, including Montrose, Elwood Smith, Rockcrest Ballet Center and the Pump House, provide facilities and services in other Rockville neighborhoods. Neighborhood-based uses are encouraged for these centers. Completing the renovation and modernization of all neighborhood centers is important and is scheduled to be completed by 2008. A desired amenity would be to have computers with Internet access available at all neighborhood centers.

RedGate Municipal Golf Course

Located in northeast Rockville, RedGate is the only public golf course of the three courses located in Rockville. As a result of a recommendation made in the 1970 Master Plan, the course opened in 1974 and provides a high quality, challenging and well-maintained facility for golfers of all abilities. The course is operated as an Enterprise Fund, in which all operating and capital costs are covered by fees paid by users. Course improvements are funded from course revenues in excess of operating costs. In order to remain competitive and continue to provide "private club" conditions, the course will need continual maintenance and upgrading in accordance with environmentally sensitive maintenance practices.

Rockville Municipal Swim Center

The Rockville Municipal Swim Center opened in 1968 and is centrally located in Welsh Park. The facilities have been renovated and expanded several times, most recently in 1991. The fully accessible complex features three outdoor pools, a 50 x 25 meter fitness and competition pool, a large, free-form, shallow “play pool,” a “pool bridge” and a tot pool. There are two indoor pools that are used year-round for a variety of other aquatics programming. There are also two fitness rooms, saunas, a spa, and swimming facilities for people with handicaps. The City needs to continue to maintain and upgrade the current facilities and infrastructure to provide the highest quality aquatic and fitness facility. Future upgrades may include various pool enhancements and the expansion of meeting and fitness facilities. Exploring ways to utilize the outdoor fitness pool for use during the winter would expand programming opportunities.

Rockville Senior Center

The Rockville Senior Center is centrally located in the Woodley Gardens neighborhood. This multi-service building offers a wide range of fitness, health, recreation, social and educational services to residents 60 years of age and older. The center also hosts City-sponsored programs, community activities and private rentals. Development of senior programs and services has been guided by a *1988 Senior Services Survey*, while renovations and expansions to the building have been implemented according to the *1991 Rockville Senior Center Master Development Plan* that was prepared in consultation with members, staff, and the community.

The proportion of residents 60 and older continues to increase. This growth will place significant demands on senior services. In particular, the capacity of the existing senior center may be reached as new seniors are expected to actively participate in center programs. Use of general-use facilities, both existing and planned, can accommodate additional programming for older adults. A more pressing need, however, will be to serve the growing frail elderly population with appropriate facilities as a greater proportion of our senior residents reach 80 plus years of age. Currently, the Rockville Senior Center does not have the space to accommodate a frail elderly/adult day care program.

A comprehensive assessment of senior needs and issues should be conducted on a 5-year interval to provide input to housing, transportation, and recreation service directions. In addition, implementing the *1991 Rockville Senior Center Master Development Plan* should be continued by renovating the kitchen and expanding the fitness room.

The Beall-Dawson House and Grounds

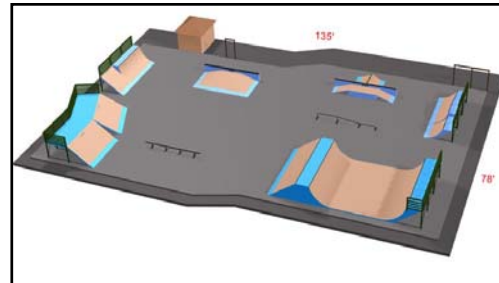
Built in 1815 and located between Middle Lane and West Montgomery Avenue at Adams Street, the Beall-Dawson House is the City’s major historic facility. One of the oldest structures in Rockville, it serves as headquarters for the Montgomery County Historical Society and is owned and maintained by the City. Open to the public, the house provides insight into the everyday life of well-to-do Rockville residents of the early nineteenth century. Various aspects of the adopted *1998 Historic Landscape Study and Master Plan* have been completed, but the

remaining items should be implemented to provide safe, attractive, educational, and enjoyable grounds around this historic site.



Rockville Skate Park

Capitalizing on a popular youth sport, the City opened a Skate Park in Welsh Park in 2001. This facility operate evenings and weekends during the school year with expanded hours during the summer.



FUTURE FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

West Rockville Recreation Center

The first major City facility to be built on the west side of I-270 is planned for construction in the Falls Grove Development at the former Thomas Farm. It will be designed to serve all City residents. Tentative plans call for a gymnasium, meeting/multi-purpose rooms, a computer center, fitness center, a kitchen, locker rooms, offices and storage. Construction is scheduled for FY2006.



King Farm

The former home of the King family was dedicated to the City as part of the King Farm development. Located on a five-acre site, it contains the main house, two large Wisconsin dairy barns with silos, two smaller barns and several small buildings. The site conveys the importance of dairy farming in Montgomery County during the twentieth century. Adaptive re-use of the buildings and site will be determined with public input.

Dog Park

Parks or park sections dedicated as an off-leash recreational area for dogs are becoming popular throughout the U.S. These facilities have proven to be community builders, as well as dog recreation areas. Considerable interest has been expressed by Rockville residents for the addition of a dog park within an existing park or open space area. The park would consist of a fenced-in area with an easily maintainable surface or surfaces, signage, and "mutt-mitt" dispensers. It is desirable to create a "friends of the dog park" group who would work with the city to establish and monitor usage policies, and other issues that arise.

Private/Regional Recreation and Arts Facilities

There are several privately operated recreation and arts facilities in Rockville. Also important are the many private community pools/summer swim clubs located in neighborhoods throughout Rockville. The largest private recreational facilities are Woodmont and Lakewood country clubs. Although these private facilities are available only via membership, they offer significant leisure-time benefits to Rockville residents. ARC IceSports, the Rockville SportsPlex, Rockville Arts Place, the Children's Musical Theatre Center, various dance and arts studios, fitness clubs, indoor racquet clubs, and other private recreational businesses also provide residents with recreational opportunities not necessarily offered by the City's Recreation and Parks Department.

Many of the types of activities that cannot be accommodated in the municipal system are available in the excellent nearby regional parks owned and operated by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (Montgomery County), the State of Maryland and the National Park System. These include Lake Needwood, Cabin John, Wheaton, Rock Creek; Hadley's Park, Seneca State Park and many others. U.S. parks within easy reach of Rockville include the C & O Canal National Historic Park, Shenandoah National Park, the Appalachian Trail, Gettysburg, Antietam and Yorktown National Military Parks, to name a few.

Recommendations

1. Exceed national standards for provision of indoor and outdoor recreation and cultural facilities.
2. Distribute indoor and outdoor facilities for all age segments throughout the City.
3. Respond to changing leisure and socio/cultural/economic trends in all facility development and redevelopment.
4. Provide outdoor drop-in playing fields for a full range of recreation and sports activities.
5. Design facilities to comply with the City's *Environmental Guidelines* and to incorporate modern, innovative design and current technology.
6. Operate all facilities with state-of-the-practice energy-use systems and other environmentally friendly methods.
7. Maintain facilities and equipment in a high quality condition to maximize original productive capacity.
8. Renovate or replace outdated facilities.
9. Employ proactive, preventative maintenance practices in all facilities.
10. Provide a level of maintenance, operating, and staffing of facilities to be consistent with levels of use.

11. Maintain and operate historic facilities located within the public park system in cooperation with Historic District Commission with the goal of balancing public access and historic preservation concerns.

RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Mission statement for Rockville Recreation Services is: “To listen and respond to the needs and interests of the community. To offer diverse recreational, educational, and cultural arts opportunities and services for all ages through quality leadership in safe, pleasant environments.”

Residents of Rockville are fortunate to be able to participate in an exceptionally wide variety of programs and activities. The Recreation and Parks Department’s role is to directly provide a broad range of basic, introductory and intermediate programs for all ages of the City’s diverse population while supporting the efforts of others to offer more specialized and advanced activities. Providers who complement City activities include the private sector, volunteer organizations and other public agencies, such as Montgomery County, Montgomery College and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

While programming activities are not usually covered in a master plan, an understanding of the types of services offered is important because of their impact on needed facilities. The following is a listing of the general programs that the City offers through its Recreation and Parks Department.

- Recreational and educational classes
- Camps (including before and after care)
- Childcare (mainly before and after school care)
- Summer Playground Programs
- Outdoor Recreation Programs (Trips and Tours)
- Senior Citizen Services
- Sports Programs
- Teen Programs
- Swim Center Programs
- Rockville Sister City Corporation
- Arts Program

Most of these programs are expanding or are expected to expand in the near future with the changing needs of the City’s increasingly diverse population, and with the growth in population expected from the King Farm and Falls Grove developments.

Youth programs, especially before and after school and camp care, are especially popular as more parents are working. Currently, specialized equipment and space needs for certain camps and classes (especially for fitness and dance) limits the ability to expand programs. Before and after school care is generally provided within the schools. Space availability must be monitored to determine if the school(s) will continue to be able to house these programs. The City is working with the Montgomery County Board of Education to promote the construction of larger gyms as the schools are renovated. Teen programs also continue to be important but are constrained by the lack of qualified staff, transportation, facility space, and funding.

As mentioned, senior citizen services are anticipated to expand with the aging population although it is expected that there may be differing needs as the “baby boomers” reach retirement age. There will also be a need to expand capacity of services for older and “frail elderly.”

Approximately 11,000 participants (school age through senior adults) and over 700 teams (youth and adult combined) participate in sports programs annually. Youth baseball and football are managed in partnership with volunteer-led, non-profit organizations. Additional partnerships for operation of youth leagues in other sports should remain an option, as well as mergers with County and/or Gaithersburg leagues in order to generate adequate participation for viable leagues in some of the small participation sports. With growth in Hispanic, Asian and other ethnic populations, more focus must be placed on addressing the sports interests of these residents as well as outreach. Likewise, the expanded participation of girls and women in sports activities has an impact on programming and expanded facilities. Interest in new team sports opportunities in lacrosse, field hockey, indoor soccer and others will continue to be monitored.

CRITICAL ISSUES IN PROGRAMMING AFFECTING FACILITY NEEDS

New Community Center

To accommodate programming demands for all ages, it is important to build a full-service community recreation center to be located in the Falls Grove Development.

Sports Fields

In order to fully accommodate program demands, the following facilities are required:

- Irrigation as an amenity at all playing fields is desirable in order to maintain the fields and mitigate damage due to intensive use.
- Two lighted official size baseball/softball ballfields.
- Two lighted football fields with a concession stand/bathrooms.
- Two to four large gymnasiums, either City facilities, or shared-use with MCPS, meeting specifications for two high school basketball gym floors.
- Four to six soccer fields (lighted), meeting high school specifications
- Two to three multi-purpose fields for either baseball/softball, adult/youth athletic play

It will be possible to site some of these facilities on the parkland that was obtained with the King Farm and Falls Grove developments.

Partnerships and Access to Facilities

As Rockville grows and demand for programs and services increases, difficulties arise in obtaining additional space. Relationships with the schools, PTAs, Inter-agency Coordinating Board and private sector facility operators should be nurtured to maximize use of available

space. Opportunities to expand programs in local elementary and middle schools should be pursued as space becomes available. Maximizing the use of City facilities should also be a priority. Policies related to facility access that address the priority of serving Rockville residents need to be strengthened (i.e., City-operated programs versus private-sector uses).

Technology

There are four City facilities where community residents have access to computers. Keeping these computer labs up to date and well serviced, as well as adding more computer labs within new recreation centers and offering affordable training will help to promote citizen computer literacy. Use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will continue to enhance park and rights-of-way planning and record keeping.

Recommendations

1. Offer leisure activities that are responsive to the changing socio/cultural/economic interests and characteristics of Rockville citizens, either through direct provision, or by facilitating the efforts of others.
2. Construct a full service community center west of I-270.
3. Construct sports fields.
4. Provide irrigation at appropriate playing fields.
5. Promote wellness programs and activities.
6. Continue to offer a selection of core recreation programs at little or no cost to the participant.
7. Offer financial assistance to low-income residents to ensure that fee-based programs are accessible to all.
8. Incorporate the use of technology into programs and services as appropriate.
9. Pursue business support for partnerships in programming, special events, facilities and parkland.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

The objectives of Special Events include providing safe, enjoyable, high-quality events



that instill civic pride for residents and showcasing Rockville's dynamic and progressive community. Special Events combine the strengths of the City's resources, including civic associations, community organizations, and businesses, in a cooperative effort to produce premium productions. As parking lot space is utilized for planned buildings in the Town Center, some of the larger events may have to be moved to another location or altered in format.

Regional Celebrations

Five large-scale outdoor festivals and events are offered each year, along with more than 25 outdoor performances. While seasonal, growers-only Farmers' Market is hosted twice weekly from May to October. More than 200,000 people participate in these celebrations and activities each year.

Community Events (Neighborhood Emphasis)

The interests of community, civic, nonprofit, and ethnic organizations are accommodated in City-run events. In addition, advice and/or support is provided to neighborhood associations and school-based groups in preparing for community special events and projects.

Community Image and Civic Pride

The Town Center beautification program helps to create a sense of community identity via banners, signs, and holiday decorations, and should be continued and enhanced. Ceremonial activities such as Flag Day, Veterans Day, Independence Day, Memorial Day and the Volunteer Appreciation Party provide opportunities for citizens to show their civic pride as well as be recognized and honored for services to community and country.



Recommendations

1. Offer special events that promote civic pride, community spirit, cultural diversity and citizen involvement.
2. Continue to produce successful special and community events, which have become core components of Rockville's hometown identity and community spirit.
3. Retain flexibility in the focus of events presented to reflect the evolving interests of the community.
4. Create new and continue existing partnerships with business leaders, civic associations, home owners associations, parent-teacher associations, nonprofit, veterans, community and service organizations.
5. Consider alternative sites and creative ways of using currently available spaces for special events as the Town Center and Richard Montgomery High School are redeveloped.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Long-range planning for facilities, programs, services and regulatory activities are regularly conducted, always with substantial citizen input. Some of the plans that guide the acquisition and maintenance of parks and open space include:

- Comprehensive Master Plan
- Environmental Guidelines
- Master Street Tree Plan

- Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) plans for new developments
- Bikeway Master Plan
- Urban Wildlife Policies
- Parkland Acquisition Policy
- Invasive Plant Policy
- Storm Water Management Watershed plans
- Master Plan for the Arts
- Art in Public Places Master Plan
- Senior Center Master Plan
- Glenview Mansion Historic Management Plan

New Policy Development

In order to ensure continued delivery of quality programs and policies, the following new plans or policies should be developed:

- Formal long-term reciprocal use agreements with schools
- Activity and Use-Carrying Capacities for Parks and Facilities
- Parkland Standards of Supply
- Developer Dedication Policy including Payment-in-Lieu Procedures
- Comprehensive Urban Wildlife Policy – All species.
- Guidelines for Encouragement of Public Art in Private Development

Recommendations

1. Monitor emerging trends to ensure services reflect the socio/cultural/economic/leisure needs and interests of Rockville residents.
2. Undertake periodic surveys and needs assessments to ensure services meet the requirements and interests of residents.
3. Solicit participant evaluations of programs, facilities and services to ensure participants' interests are met.
4. Develop new policies or procedures to guide planning and service delivery in the following areas: senior housing, non-resident fees, reciprocal use with schools, carrying capacity, parkland standards of supply, developer dedications, urban wildlife.

GUIDE TO PARKS AND FACILITIES

Park, Map Location, Acreage, Features

Anderson Park, B3, 12.9, Open Space	
Broome Athletic Park, D6, 7.5	
Bullards Park, D2, 4.7	
Calvin Park, D6, 5.9	
Civic Center Park, D5, 6, C5, 153	
College Gardens Park, B3, 6	
Courthouse Square Park, D4, 1.5	
David Scull Park, C5, 3.6	
Dawson Farm Park, E4, 5	
Dogwood Park, E3, 24.9	
Elwood Smith Park, D4, 7.5	
First Street Park, D5, 1, Open Space	
Friends Park, D3, .5	
Glenora Park, D1, 5.9	
Hillcrest Park, D5, 4.4	
Horizon Hill Park, E2, 30.1	
Horners Lane (Pump House), Croyden Park, C4, 1.2	
Israel Park Recreation Area, C4, 6.7	
Jacquelin Trells Williams Park, D3, 1.06	
James Monroe Park, E4, .75	
Kinship Park, D3, .25	
Lincoln Terrace, C4, 1.1	
Lone Oak Park, D5, 4.5	
Mannakee Circle, C3, .7	
Maryvale Park, D5, 6	
Memory Park Walk, C4, .2	
Montrose Park, F5, 5.7	
Montrose Woods Park, F5, 6.1	
Monument Park, D3, 8.1	
North Farm Park, F4, 5.5	
North Street Park, C3, 5	
Northeast Park, C5, 6.7	
Orchard Ridge Park, E3, 1.7	
Potomac Woods Park, F2, 42	
RedGate Municipal Golf Course, C5 130	
Rockcrest Park, E5, 7.4	
Rockmead Park, E2, 34.2	
Rockville Municipal Swim Center, C3, 14 (2 outdoor and 2 indoor pools)	
Rockville Senior Center, B2, 12	
Silver Rock Park, D5, 2.5	
Tweed Park, D6, 1.4, Open Space	
Twinbrook Bike Path, E6, 9.0	
Twinbrook Park, E6, 9.2	
Upper Watts Branch Park Forest Preserve, B2, 52.6, Open Space	
Veterans Park, D4, .26	
Welsh Park, C3, 32.7	
Woodley Gardens Park, C2, 37.5	
Woottons Mill Park, D2, 76.2	

KEY

- Art
- Ballfield
- Basketball Court (lighted)
- Basketball Court (unlighted)
- Bike Trail
- Fishing
- Fitness Course
- Flower Beds/Gardens
- Handicapped Acc. & Bathrooms
- Parking Lot
- Passive Park w/ Bench
- Picnic Area
- Playfield (general)
- Playground (tot and/or children)
- Shelter
- Shuffleboard
- Swimming
- Recreation Center
- Tennis Court (lighted)
- Tennis Court (unlighted)
- Tennis Practice Wall
- Tetherball Pole
- Toilet Facilities
- Volleyball Poles
- Water Fountains
- Wooded Trail

