



Reimagining RedGate Park

Existing Conditions Assessment

Spring 2021



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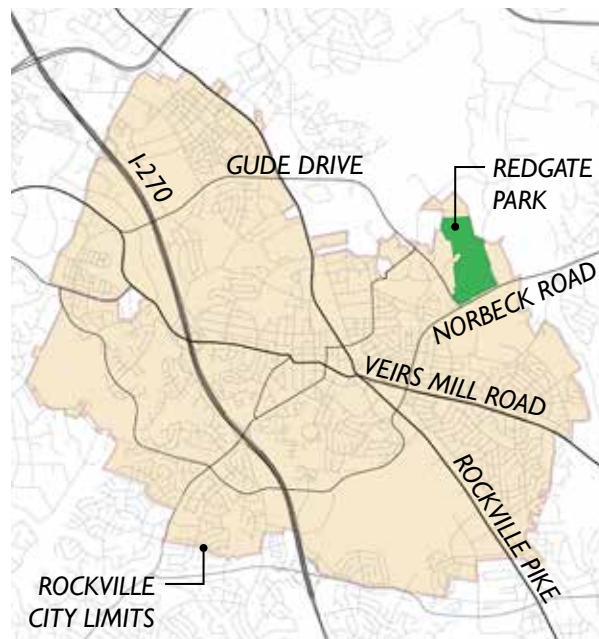


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Introduction

The RedGate Park property is approximately 130 acres located at the northeastern edge of the city at the intersection of Norbeck and Avery Roads. As described in the Rockville2040 Comprehensive Plan, RedGate Park is located within Rockville's Planning Area 17. Planning Area 17 is unique in Rockville for its mix of land uses. It consists of light industry, residential apartments, retail shops, office parks, RedGate Park (the former RedGate Golf Course), and public property owned by the City of Rockville and Montgomery County. The RedGate Golf Course preserved significant open space acreage within the planning area. In 2019, the Mayor and Council voted to end the property's use as a golf course.

On March 30, 2020, the Mayor and Council unanimously voted to retain the entire property as a park, with elements of both active and passive recreation, including natural open areas.



Rockville and RedGate Park Context Map

Existing development on the park property includes a 5,400 SF pro-shop/clubhouse building with an outdoor deck, and a 2,600 SF golf cart storage building. Currently the site is well-used by the community for birdwatching, wildlife viewing, walking, jogging, other passive recreational activities and active uses/events like "Live at RedGate". Additionally, a cell tower and associated access easement is located in the southeast corner of the property. The site's existing conditions are described on the following pages and, combined with statistically valid survey results and community input, will serve as the foundation for alternative concept plans showing how the site can sensitively accommodate both passive and active park programming.

Recreation And Parks Strategic Plan

The Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) by PROS Consulting, dated 2020, analyzed Rockville's recreation and parks programs and facilities, and identified citywide priorities and facility needs for the future. Information to note as the master plan for RedGate Park is developed includes themes and ideas as they relate to the entire park system as well as those specific to RedGate Park. Key themes and ideas from the strategic plan are listed below:

Strategic Plan: System Wide

Vision

"To be THE place to make lifelong memories as you live, work, play and thrive."

Mission

"To nurture community connections."

Core Values

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Exceptional Customer Experience
- Stewardship of Resources
- Innovation
- Collaboration

Big Moves

- Build a standalone brand identity for the Recreation and Parks Department to tell its story and increase community awareness and participation.
- Continue to identify new and dedicated funding sources to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Design, develop and maximize the use of RedGate Park as a community asset and a regional destination.
- Redevelop King Farm Farmstead to balance its existing historic amenities with newer cultural and recreation offerings.
- Ensure equity of access in program and park/facility distribution throughout Rockville.
- Evaluate the viability of multi-generational community facilities focused on new recreational programming, performing arts and cultural offerings.

Community Engagement Input

The following is a summary of input received during the community engagement effort in the development of the Strategic Plan through interviews, public meetings and a statistically valid online survey of Rockville residents.

Opportunities: Participants identified a number of opportunities for the park system during interviews and public meetings. These include:

- Importance of the balance of natural areas, open spaces, and developed park spaces to keep the small-town charm of Rockville that people have come to appreciate and expect;
- The re-purposing of the RedGate Golf Course to RedGate Park as the biggest development opportunity for the park system;
- Maximizing partnerships in facility development and providing programs and events;
- Increased public awareness of the Department of Recreation and Parks;
- New signage; and
- A more prominent role for arts and culture.

Top Facility Priorities: Participants identified five system-wide facility priorities during interviews and public meetings. These include:

- The re-purposing of RedGate Golf Course and development of signature facilities within the property (i.e., amphitheater, trails, open space, arboretum, etc.);
- Multi-generational indoor recreation spaces to replace older aging facilities;
- Connectivity and trails;
- Existing restrooms to be open and new ones to be added to existing parks; and
- Seasonal cover at the Swim Center outdoor Competitive Pool for year-round use.

Top Recreational Priorities: Participants also identified five system-wide recreation priorities during interviews and public meetings. These include:

- Keep up on recreational trends and community needs as they evolve.
- Continue offering senior programs across the City to help address the aging population.
- Continue to offer opportunities in the evening.
- Enhance performing arts and cultural event opportunities.
- More programming for developmentally challenged residents and seniors.

Facility/Amenity Needs: The ETC Institute administered a community online survey. The five recreation facilities/amenities with the highest number of households that have an unmet need were:

- Indoor walking and running tracks;
- Botanical gardens/arboretum;
- Mountain bike and hiking trails (natural surface); and
- Outdoor walking/running track
- Natural areas/wildlife habitats.

Facility/Amenity Importance: The survey also revealed the five facilities/amenities that were most important to residents:

- Walking trails (paved surface);
- Small neighborhood parks (1-10 acres);
- Natural areas/wildlife habitats;
- Paved greenway trails; and
- Senior Center and mountain bike and hiking trails (tied).

Priorities for Investment: The ETC Institute developed a Priority Investment Rating system to provide an objective tool for evaluating the priority that organizations should place on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating equally weighs the importance that residents place on facilities/amenities and how many residents have unmet needs for the facility. Based upon this Priority Investment Rating, the following eight facilities/amenities were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Walking trails (paved surface);
- Natural areas/wildlife habitats;
- Mountain bike and hiking trails (natural surface);
- Indoor walking and running tracks;
- Botanical gardens/arboretum;
- Small neighborhood parks;
- Paved greenway trails; and
- Outdoor walking/running track.

Programming Needs: The survey also revealed the five programs with the highest number of households that had unmet needs:

- Adult fitness and wellness programs/activities;
- Farmers market;
- Nature program/activities;
- Adult trips; and
- Outdoor adventure programs.

Level of Service Standards

The Strategic Plan also identified Level of Service standards-guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to parks, facilities, and amenities. The standards were based upon population figures for 2019 and the projected 2024 population and identified existing developed park facilities and anticipated park facility development (2019-2024) that either meet standards or where a need exists. A need has been identified for the following additional facilities/amenities based upon 2024 Facility Standards:

- Neighborhood Parks (34 acres)
- Destination Parks (25 acres)
- Total developed park acres (57 acres)
- Total park acres (51 acres)
- Multi-use trails (6.03 miles)
- Natural trails (2.84 miles)
- Total trail miles (8.86 miles)
- Park shelters (5 sites)
- 90' ball fields (2 fields)
- Rectangular multi-purpose fields (5 fields)
- Outdoor volleyball courts (5 courts)
- Dedicated pickleball (7 courts)
- Dog parks (1 site)
- Recreation/aquatics (57,612 sq. ft.)
- Special use/cultural facilities (7,019 sq. ft.)

At-Risk Facilities/Amenities

In addition to the unmet needs outlined above under the Level of Service Standards, several properties with park facilities/amenities are at-risk due to the lack of City ownership or an agreement that could include transitioning the property to a different use. Potential loss of facilities/amenities and the number of parks where the loss could occur are outlined below. At-risk facilities located nearby to RedGate Park, in Mark Twain Park, are specifically identified.

- Up to an almost 10% reduction in park acreage level of service;
- Multi-use trails in three parks;
- Natural trails in one park;
- Park shelters in three parks, including Mark Twain Park;
- Playgrounds in seven parks, including Mark Twain Park;
- 60' and 70' ball fields in four parks, including Mark Twain Park;
- Rectangular multi-purpose fields in one park;
- Tennis courts in five parks, including Mark Twain Park;
- Pickleball courts in one park;
- Outdoor basketball courts in five parks, including Mark Twain Park; and
- A dog park in one park.

Additional Considerations

As part of the Parks Facilities Conclusions discussion in the Strategic Plan, the following additional recommendations were identified:

Invasive Species Management: Invasive species present a challenge to the long-term health of the ecology of park spaces and natural areas. The Strategic Plan recommends inter-agency coordination to provide near term solutions to identify and eradicate invasive species within parks in addition to the established volunteer-based Weed Warrior program.

Integrated Stormwater Management: Consider integration of innovative stormwater management approaches to solve erosion issues where it exists on parkland and include educational opportunities to highlight these practices.

Strategic Plan: RedGate Park-Specific

The Strategic Plan specifically identifies that RedGate Park is the biggest development opportunity for Rockville's park system. The park will shape and define the City into the future and the outcome (of its planning and design) should create a defining, premier outdoor gathering space in Rockville. The Strategic Plan further identifies re-purposing RedGate Golf Course and developing RedGate Park with signature facilities (amphitheater, trails, open space, arboretum, etc.) as one of five top facility priorities. Development of RedGate Park will help provide additional recreational opportunities that should help to alleviate the overuse of some parks and spaces within the overall system.

Recommended Capital Improvements for RedGate Park

The Strategic Plan recommends that the City should engage the community in a RedGate Park Master Plan to program a build out taking into consideration the current and future needs and community values defined in the Strategic Plan. Redesigning RedGate Park, with both active and passive elements, can provide the City and the community with a truly regional asset and help meet future demands and trends. Specific facilities/amenities should consider the following:

- Trails;
- Dogpark (where it can share infrastructure such as parking, restroom facilities, etc., with other facilities/amenities);
- Pickleball;
- A multi-use, multi-generational community recreation center;
- Wayfinding and signage;
- Integrated stormwater management with educational opportunities; and

- Nature play, which can be described as natural, unprogrammed playgrounds that consider topography, forest cover and unconventional practices such as tube mazes, landform berming, and unprogrammed spaces to encourage imaginative play. This would be in contrast to the structured playgrounds with modern play equipment found throughout the city.

These themes and ideas from the Strategic Plan will be important to consider in conjunction with the existing site conditions as described on the following pages. Additionally, RedGate Park specific community input (obtained through the City-administered online survey) will be considered as well to refine the program and priorities for RedGate Park.



Existing Golf Course Fairway Marker



Existing Aerial View from Clubhouse Deck Toward Rock Creek Regional Park

Landform

The park site has a topographic relief—the elevation change from the lowest to highest point—of approximately 114 feet, with the lowest point located along Avery Road along the eastern property line where the site drains toward the Rock Creek stream system. The highest point is located nearby at the northeast corner of the property (elevation 445 feet). The site is bisected by a series of ridges and valleys, with several knolls distributed throughout the site ranging in elevation from 415-430 feet.

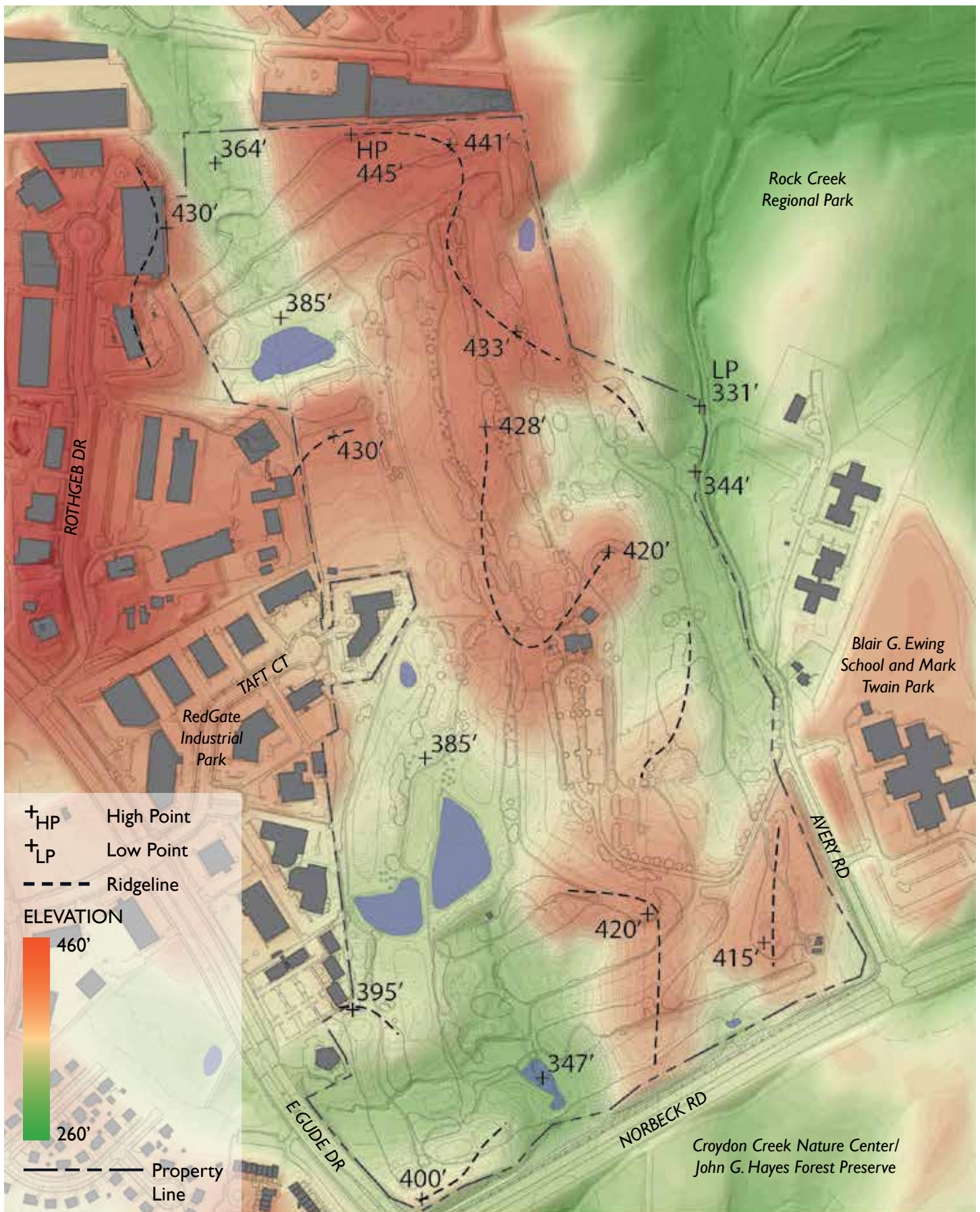
The resulting rolling landform is one of the most distinctive features of the RedGate Park property. The knolls provide outward-oriented views across the entire park and surroundings while the valleys offer inward-oriented enclosures, secluded from their surroundings. While the landform presents challenges with ADA accessibility to all areas within the park, it also presents opportunities to create distinct use areas and a variety of user experiences.



The Park's Rolling Landform Defines Viewsheds and Creates a Variety of User Experiences



Ridges and Rolling Topography Help Define Inward-Oriented Enclosures



Landform

Environmental Features

Based upon available information, the approximately 131-acre project has several environmental features, including but not limited to stream buffers, wetlands, steep slopes, highly erodible soils, and forested areas (including forest conservation easements) that will help to shape the park development opportunities. Based on available FEMA, City of Rockville, and Montgomery County information, no 100-year floodplains are present within the project limits, however the City's Environmental Guidelines state that floodplains for drainage areas of more than 30 acres must be shown. The drainage area for the North Hayes Tributary (which flows through the culvert crossing below Norbeck Road) and the drainage area for the tributary just downstream of the Gude Maintenance Yard Wet Pond (flowing toward the northwest corner of the site) are both above 30 acres and will require delineation prior to the development of the park. However, based upon the size of the stream buffer for both areas, it is anticipated that the 100-year floodplain in both tributaries will remain within the stream buffer; thus if the stream buffers remain untouched the 100-year floodplain shall not be encroached upon.

A formal Natural Resources Inventory and Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) has not been completed previously, nor is one being completed as part of this master planning effort. The environmental features described below are based upon available information provided by the City of Rockville. Environmental related restrictions are from the City's Environmental Guidelines (For the Protection and Enhancement of the City's Natural Resources), dated July 1999.

Hydrology

Drainage

The site drains into Rock Creek via several streams. The Northeast Park Tributary conveys drainage from Gude Drive and flows into the southernmost pond, known as the RedGate Southwest Pond. Portions of this tributary were upgraded with a City installed stream restoration project in 2005.

The Northeast Park Tributary combines with the North Hayes Tributary and flows through a culvert under Norbeck Road. Across Norbeck Road, the Northeast Hayes Tributary drains into the Middle Hayes Tributary, and then into the Eastern Hayes Tributary which outfalls into Rock Creek. An unnamed tributary to Rock Creek along the eastern property line adjacent to Avery Road (which was stabilized by the City in 2005) drains to the north and another unnamed tributary to Southlawn Branch at the northern end of the site drains to the north as well. These both eventually outfall into Rock Creek. Additionally, several swales throughout the site, as well as two west of the existing club house, flow to the tributaries described above.

According to the National Wetlands Inventory, both the Northeast Park Tributary and the North Hayes Tributary are classified as wetlands.

Existing Stormwater Management Facilities

Several City maintained stormwater management facilities exist within the park. Several other facilities installed with the golf course have either been removed and decommissioned or are not within the City's stormwater management system. The following summary of all known facilities and the status of each is based upon discussions with representatives from the City's Department of Public Works (DPW) as well as plans and calculations provided by DPW. Most of the facilities were installed with the original golf course circa 1973, pond identification numbers from the original plans have been used to identify the facilities. NOTE: Pond #5 was originally intended to be along the northern side of the entrance driveway. Pond #6 was originally intended to be across Avery Road near the existing Avery House.

- **RedGate Pond #1 (City Facility ID 73-2032B):** The western most of the two interconnected large irrigation ponds installed with the original golf course. The wet pond was retrofitted in 2005 by the City. Based upon the SWM Drainage Area Chart provided with the plans, the drainage area to

the facility is 20.46 acres with 11.66 acres of impervious cover. The same table indicates that the facility does not provide Channel Protection Volume (CpV) or Water Quality Management (WQv). The facility outfalls to a channel within the drainage area for the RedGate Southwest Pond #3 described below.

- **RedGate Pond #2 (City Facility ID 73-2032A):** The eastern most of the two interconnected large irrigation ponds installed with the original golf course. The wet pond was retrofitted in 2005 by the City. Based upon the SWM Drainage Area Chart provided with the plans, the drainage area to the facility is 42.29 acres with 11.03 acres of impervious cover. The same table indicates that the facility does not provide CpV or WQv. The facility outfalls to a channel within the drainage area for the RedGate Southwest Pond #3 described below.
- **RedGate Southwest Pond #3 (City Facility ID 73-2036):** The pond was

installed with the original golf course. The City provided extensive upgrades to the facility in 2005. Based upon the SWM Drainage Area Chart provided with the plans, the drainage area to the facility is 143.0 acres (direct drainage area of 30.79 acres) with 50.16 acres of impervious cover. The facility contains drainage from the two irrigation ponds described above as well as the Northeast Pond. The Northeast Pond is located outside the park's limits across Gude Drive and was retrofitted in 2005 as well. The City plans to retrofit the Northeast Pond further in 2021/2022. The summary table indicates that the Southwest Pond #3 facility provides 0.37 acre-feet of WQv treatment and 0.27 acre-feet of CpV treatment. A majority of the area draining to the facility consists of off-site drainage from the properties along Gude Drive.



RedGate Irrigation Pond #2

- **RedGate Southeast Dry Pond #4 (City Facility ID 73-2035):** The pond was installed with the original golf course and is no longer in use. The pond can be decommissioned with the development of the park.
- **RedGate Northwest Dry Pond #7 (City Facility ID 73-2034):** The pond was installed with the original golf course and was removed/decommissioned by the City. Streambank stabilization efforts were provided with the decommissioning and the area is now within the stream buffer.
- **RedGate Northeast Dry Pond #8 (City Facility ID 73-2033):** The dry pond was installed with the original golf course and appears to still be functioning. The pond may be decommissioned with the development of the park.
- **RedGate PWN Pond (City Facility ID 2010-02001):** The dry pond was installed with the original golf course and was removed and decommissioned in 2010 with the development of the Gude Maintenance Yard development.
- **RedGate Water Feature (No City Facility ID):** The wet pond was installed as water feature for the golf course, however, the City has no record of the facility. The pond may be decommissioned with the development of the park. However, the pond may be subject to environmental regulations, which should be vetted with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) prior to park development.
- **Gude Maintenance Facility SWM Pond No. 1 (City Facility ID 2010-02001):** The extended detention wet pond was installed in 2010 with the Gude Maintenance Yard project and provides stormwater management treatment for the Gude Maintenance Yard. Based upon the calculations provided on the construction plans, the drainage area to the facility is 29.4 acres and it provides 66,509 cubic-feet of WQV, 31,410 cubic-feet of CPV, as well as water quantity management.

Stream Buffers

Three large areas of stream buffer are present within the project limits, the first along Avery Road, the second in the southwest portion of the site at the culvert under Norbeck Road, and the third at the northern end of the site. These areas total about 17% of the site area, or about 22.7 acres. Streams, ponds, natural surface springs, and seeps (continuous or ephemeral groundwater flow exiting from slopes or ground surfaces under artesian pressure or gravity flow) shall be maintained in a natural condition so that the existing hydraulic regimen and water quality standards can be maintained, according to the City's Environmental Guidelines. Except as provided below, no buildings, structures, impervious surfaces, or activities requiring clearing or grading will be permitted in stream buffers:

- Temporary sediment and erosion facilities in unforested areas;
- Clearing and grading for other purposes within the stream buffer (such as paving for bikeways or other recreation amenities) may be allowed on a case-by-case basis;
- Stormwater management facilities are generally discouraged within stream buffers, but may be allowed on a case-by-case basis;
- Road and utility crossings will be permitted within stream buffers when it is satisfactorily demonstrated that such locations are the best available option considering all of the circumstances, and provided that every effort is made to locate road alignment and/or utilities to create the least disturbance to existing vegetation, grade, and wetlands; and
- Deposition or stockpiling of any material such as excavated rock, topsoil, stumps and shrubs, grass clippings, and building material within the designated stream buffer is strongly discouraged.

Mitigation is needed when encroaching on stream buffers, several mitigation options are available including but not limited to buffer averaging, enhanced forest retention or reforestation, and stream channel restoration.

While not completed as part of this master planning effort, the eventual site design engineer will need to delineate and survey all Waters of the U.S. (streams and wetlands) within the Study Area in accordance with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Baltimore District guidelines, and obtain a preliminary jurisdictional determination from the USACE and concurrence from MDE and USACE on resource boundaries.

Steep Slopes and Soils

With the rolling topography, steep slopes can be found throughout the site and are defined in two ways:

Steep Slopes Outside of Stream Buffers (Hydraulically Remote)

Slopes above 25% and outside of stream buffers are considered hydraulically remote steep slopes. To the extent possible, hydraulically remote steep slope areas should be incorporated into the site's open space and/or remain undisturbed. However, development of these areas may be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Highly Erodible Soils

Approximately 91% (119 acres) of the project area is classified as highly erodible soils. These soils are particularly susceptible to erosion when coupled with steep slopes. Highly erodible soils should be managed carefully during construction and the City's Environmental Guidelines encourage designating these areas as open space.

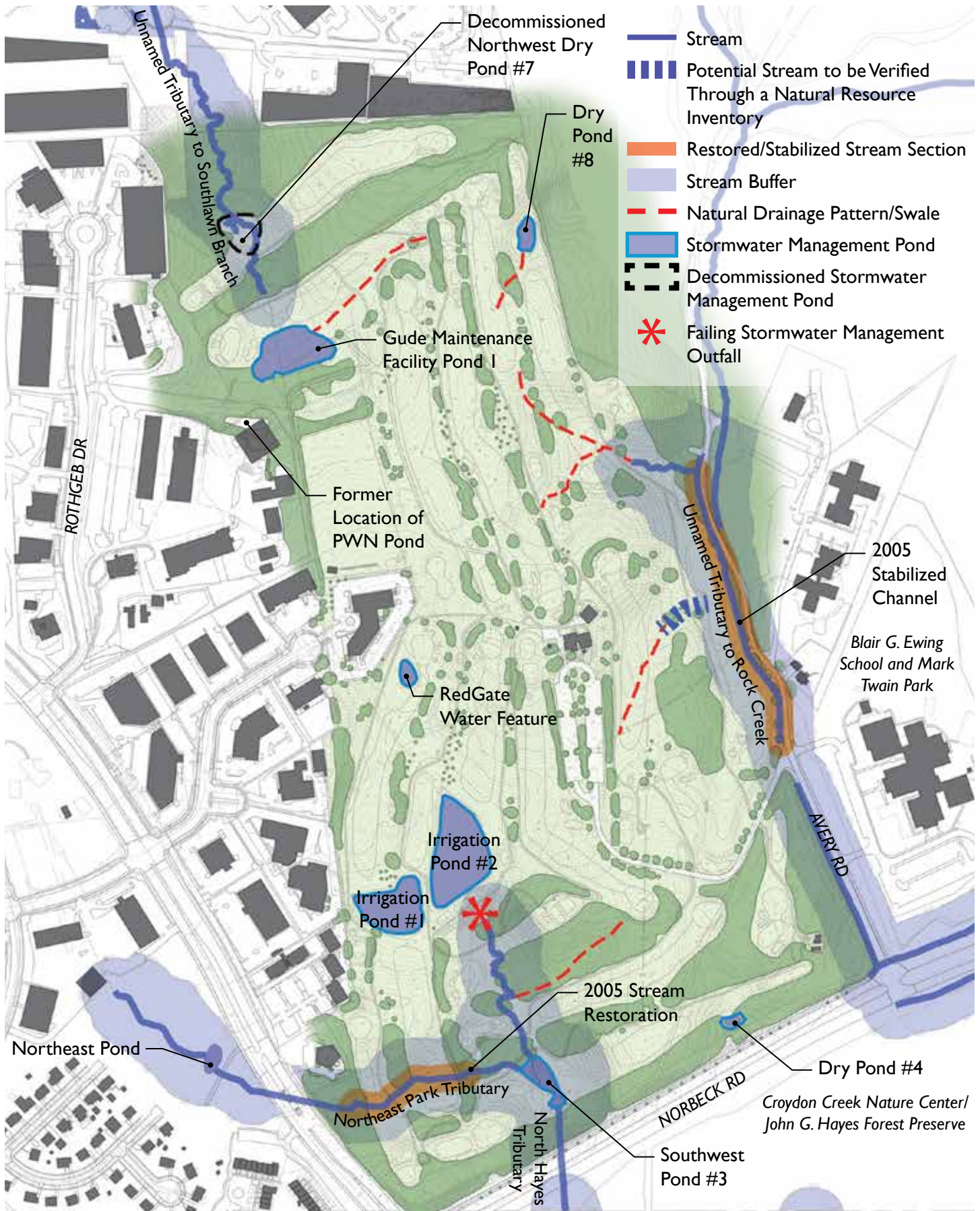
A geotechnical report prepared by a professional engineer will be required prior to development of the park. The report shall provide more detail of soil and geologic characteristics in order to determine whether soils can support the proposed development using suitable engineering measures that would remediate the poor soil conditions.



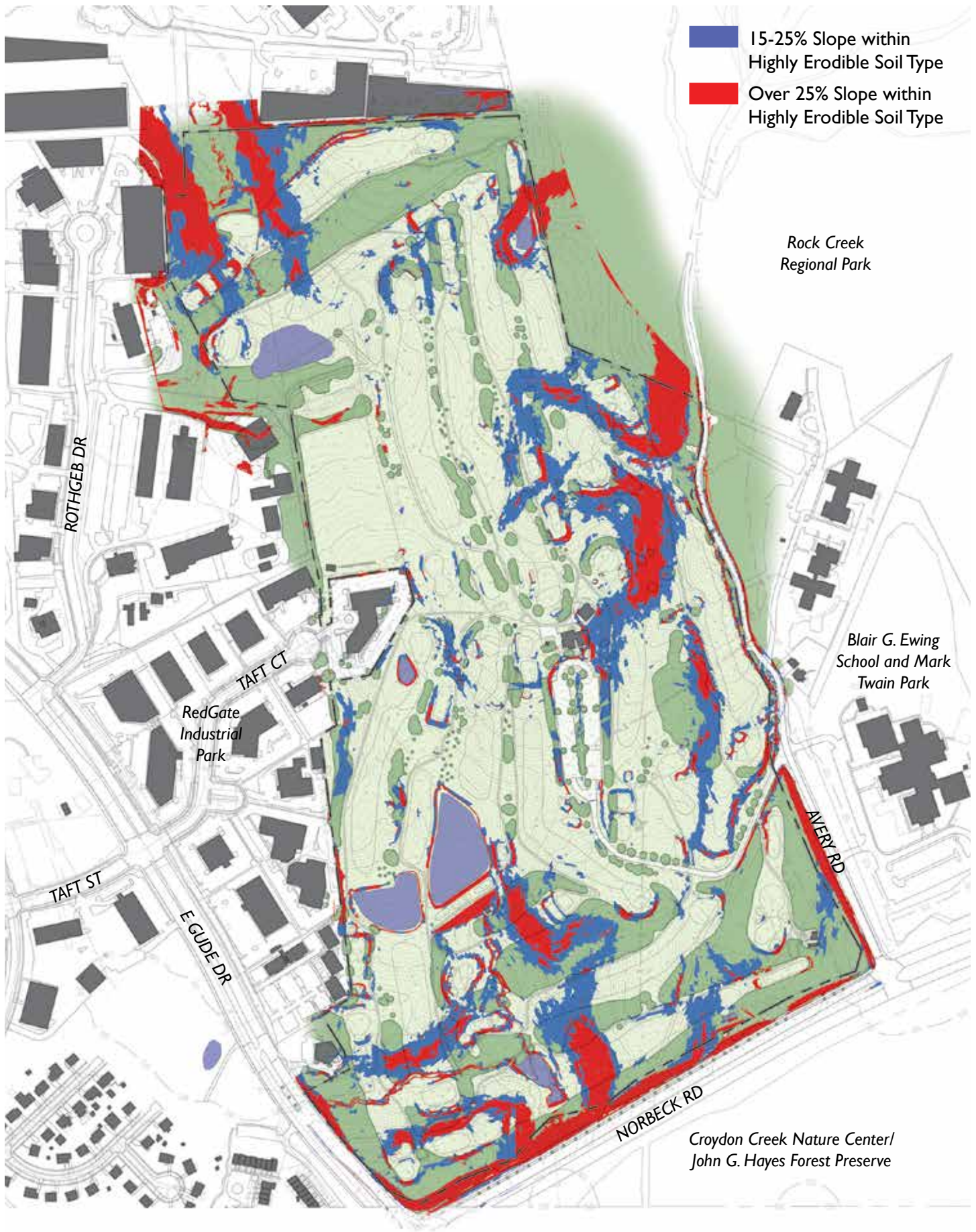
RedGate Northeast Dry Pond #8



Steep Slope on Northern Section of Site



Environmental Features and Hydrology



Steep Slopes and Soils

Vegetation

Vegetation on the site is defined by woodlands, tree groves, buffer plantings, hedge rows, individual trees, mowed lawn and limited mow areas. While a detailed vegetation analysis was not done as part of this study, tree masses were provided by the City and are shown on the maps. Site observation was also conducted in February and August 2021. Predominant tree species observed within naturalized areas include White Oak, Tuliptree, Beech, White Pine, Pignut Hickory, and Sycamore (near streams). Additional tree species observed within naturalized areas include Green Ash, Black Walnut, Black Cherry, Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven), River Birch, Mulberry, Red Maple, Eastern Red Cedar, and Sassafras. Accent plantings of trees, likely planted as part of the golf course development, include Flowering Cherry, Copper Beech, Pin Oak, Japanese Zelkova, Norway Spruce, Bald Cypress, Arborvitae, Blue Atlas Cedar, Weeping Willow, and Golden Rain Tree.

The extensive lawn areas are the result of the site's former use as a golf course. Since the site discontinued its use as a golf course, the City has limited regular mowing to some areas. Many of the remaining areas have reverted to meadow allowing turf grasses to mature and other species to grow. The prevalent species within these areas are Common Boneset, a native flowering perennial in the aster family, and Burnweed. Additionally, the following have been observed: Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Common Mullein, Black-Eyed Susan, and Nettle species. While a significant amount of vegetation on site is native, invasive species are present—especially within stream buffers—including Japanese Stiltgrass, Japanese Honeysuckle, Beefsteak (*Perilla* spp.), Garlic Mustard, Sericea Lespedeza, and Porcelain-berry.

Approximately 8.2 acres of woodlands are protected within forest conservation easements.



Stream Buffers Add to the Diversity of Vegetation on Site



Larger Tree Groves and Openings Add Character to the Northern and Southern Sections of the Park



Vegetation

Utilities

Below is a description of the existing utilities based upon available information. The condition of all utilities described below is unknown and will need to be verified and capacities confirmed prior to the development of construction documents for park improvements.

Storm Drains

Off-site storm drainage is conveyed from Taft Court through a 27" reinforced concrete pipe (RCP) system (circa 1972) which outfalls into an existing on-site stormwater management facility, flowing north to south. Another 27" reinforced concrete pipe system, as well as an existing 18" system extending from development further south on Taft Court and properties further south on Gude Drive, outfall to an adjacent stormwater management facility to east of the facility described above. The western most facility outfalls to the eastern most, which then outfalls to the stream valley, crossing several former cart paths flowing to a system below Norbeck Road and eventually to Rock Creek.

A 30" high-density polyethylene (HDPE) storm drain system outfalls from the properties to the east of Rothgeb Drive to a small stormwater management facility at the northwest corner of the project limits. The facility then outfalls to the north toward a stream buffer.

Stormwater Management

Refer to the previous section on Hydrology.

Domestic Water

Currently, the water service to the former clubhouse is provided by the City of Rockville via an existing 8-inch water line extending from Taft Court. The condition of the water line is unknown. The system may be used for proposed park needs. Water and sanitary sewer service along the Avery Road corridor is provided by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) and portions of the park property fall within their jurisdiction.

Irrigation and Pump House

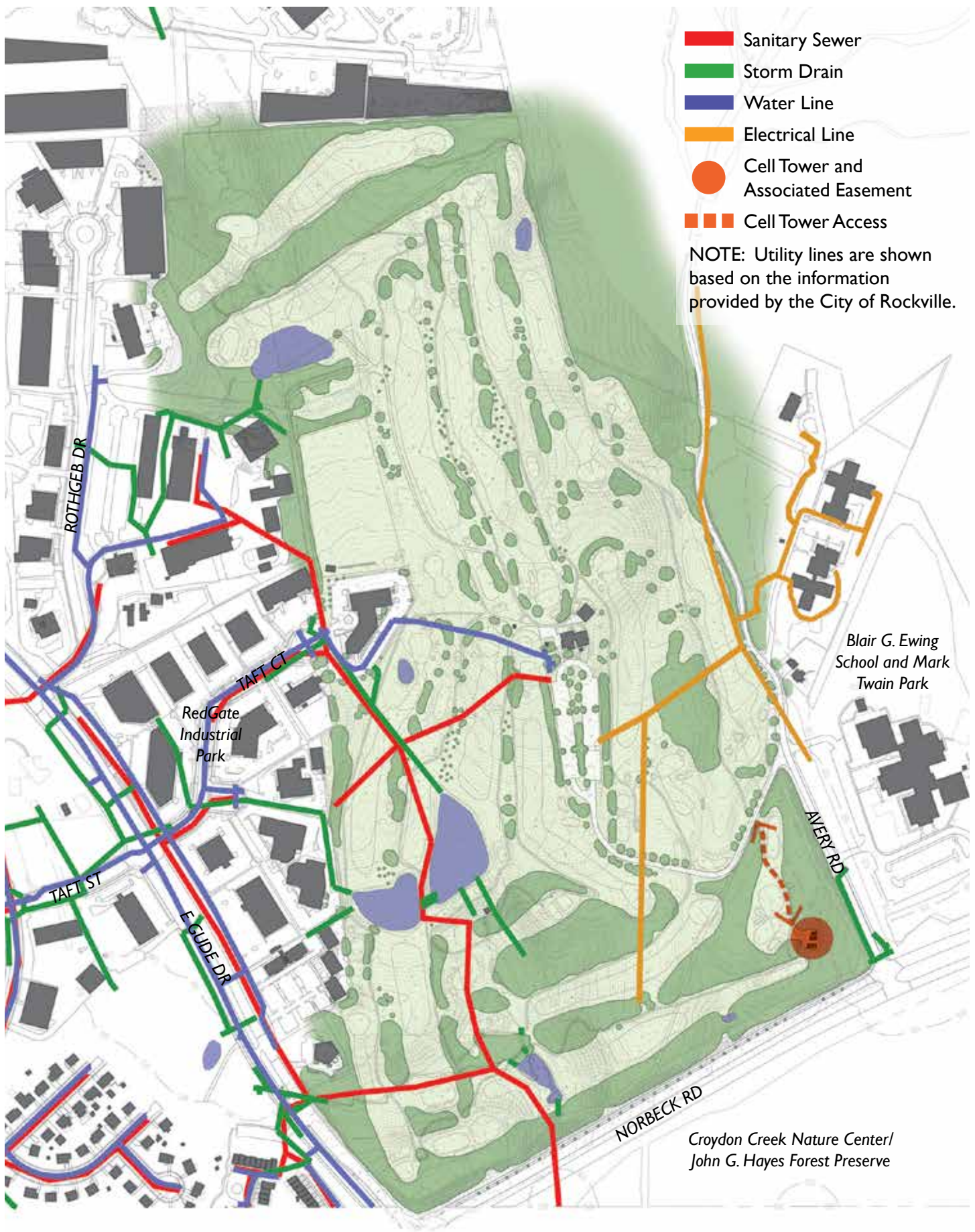
An existing irrigation system and associated pump house were utilized for the golf course. The latest plans for the irrigation system were provided by HydroDesigns Inc., dated 2000, and included irrigation for the entire golf course. The pump station plans date back to the original golf course installation in the early 1970's. The system has likely not been utilized since the closure of the golf course. The condition of the irrigation system and the pump house is unknown. However, based upon the age and intermittent use, much of the system may not be salvageable.

Sanitary Sewer

Existing 8" gravity sanitary sewer mains (pipes with positive slopes that do not require pumping) that convey off-site systems extend from the west side of the property at Taft Court and further south on Gude Drive; through the low-lying stream valleys; then combining and exiting to the west of the existing culvert under Norbeck Road. The service connection from the clubhouse connects to the sewer main from Taft Court. All sewer systems appear to be vitrified clay pipe (VCP) and conditions are unknown. The sewer mains conveying off-site areas will need to be maintained or relocated. Proposed park development systems may tie into the gravity systems.

Cell Tower and Associated Easement

An existing cell tower and associated easement is located near the southeast corner of the site. Ground Lease Documents dated 2003 indicate the easement was dedicated to APC Reality and Equipment Company, LLC, d/b/a Sprint PCS. Access to the cell tower extends from the park entrance road to the cell tower itself and should be maintained for the life of the tower.



Utilities

Power

The Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) provides power to the former clubhouse and cell tower from a below ground feed along Avery Road. The existing power infrastructure has not been evaluated. This will need to be done in the future to confirm compatibility with the proposed park development.

Circulation

Vehicular Access and Circulation

Vehicular access to the park and existing parking lot is provided from Avery Road along the eastern edge of the property. Avery Road is two lanes and classified as a Primary Residential Class 2 Roadway with a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour. The current egress configuration requires an extremely sharp turn for patrons exiting south on Avery Road, toward Norbeck Road. The sight distance to the left (or north) when exiting onto Avery Road appears to be limited and is of concern. A sight distance analysis has not been done.



Existing Park Pathways Traverse Rolling Hills and Steep Slopes

This is typically undertaken once desired park programming and master plan elements are determined so that any deficiencies in site distance can be mediated with proposed improvements.

Because of steep slopes and private development conditions along the perimeter of the park property, opportunities for additional vehicular access to the site are limited. The exception is at 6 Taft Court which is a City-owned building adjacent to the western park boundary. Additionally, there are no significant topographic constraints between 6 Taft Court and the park.

Pedestrian Circulation

The entire RedGate Park property is well connected with an internal pedestrian pathway network, resulting from the site's former use as a golf course. These paths provide access to all areas of the park and are well-used by park visitors.

While the park is well-served internally with a pathway network, pedestrian connections currently do not exist to the park from adjacent properties or from the adjacent public sidewalk network. This extensive sidewalk network along adjacent public streets is outlined below:

- An asphalt sidewalk occurs along one side of Southlawn Court to the north;
- A concrete sidewalk occurs along one side of Rothgeb Drive to the northwest;
- Concrete sidewalks are located along both sides of Taft Court to the west;
- A concrete sidewalk is located along the east side of Gude Drive and an asphalt shared-use path occurs along the west side of Gude Drive to the west of the park;
- A shared-use path is located on the north side of Norbeck Road, adjacent to park property; and
- An asphalt and concrete sidewalk is located on the east side of Avery Road, from Norbeck Road to approximately 100' beyond the entrance to RedGate Park and the homestead at 14615 Avery Road. While this sidewalk is located on the opposite side of Avery Road from the park, no crosswalks

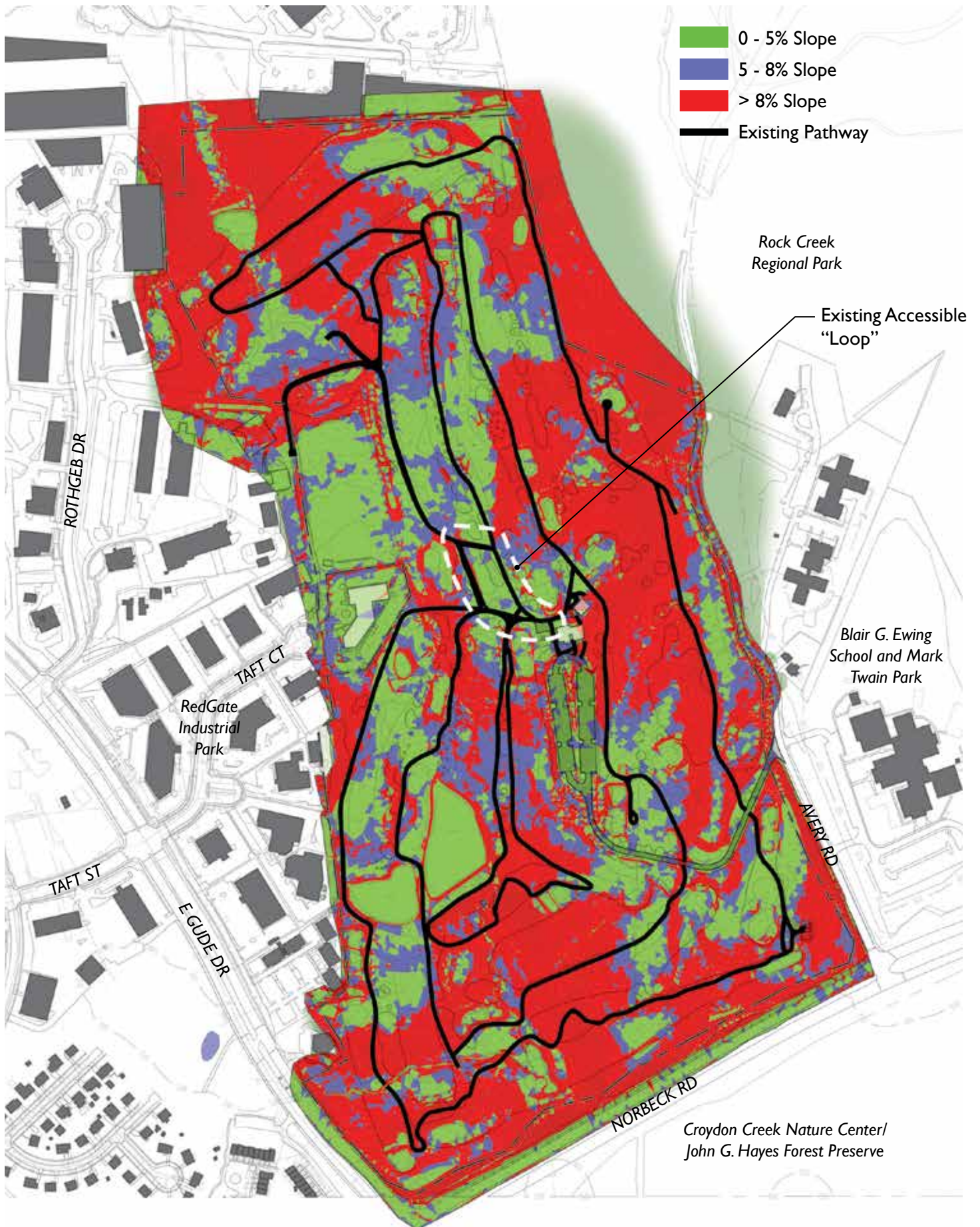
connect over to the park property with the exception of the intersection of Avery and Norbeck Roads.

Pedestrian Accessibility

Because the internal pathway network was established to follow the fairways, many of them are not ADA accessible, where maximum slopes should not exceed 5% (8% with handrails). The paths can be quite steep in many areas, often traversing a slope directly, rather than gradually following the contours of the land, and can even be challenging for able-bodied individuals. Some of these steep sections may present some interesting opportunities, however, for park programming while other sections might be considered for removal.

The following Accessibility exhibit highlights the pathway network superimposed over a slope map. While many sections of pathways are located on slopes 5% or less (and considered accessible), they are interrupted by sections of pathways over 5% and, in many cases, over 8%. Therefore, except for one small area near the clubhouse, there are no fully accessible "loops" within the entire pathway network.





Accessibility

Adjacent Land Use

RedGate Park is currently surrounded by a variety of non-residential uses. Civic uses occur to the east of the park, with the Blair G. Ewing School and Mark Twain Park property and the Avery House rehabilitation center. As noted in the summary of the Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan, Mark Twain Park and its associated recreational facilities/amenities (shared with the Blair G. Ewing School) are considered “at-risk” with the potential for these facilities being lost from the park system. Facilities/amenities here include two ball fields (with an overlapping rectangular multi-purpose field), tennis court, basketball court, playground and park shelter.

Additional civic uses occur adjacent to the west and include the city’s Public Works and Recreation and Parks Maintenance Complex. The RedGate Industrial Center is also located to the west, between East Gude Drive and RedGate Park and is comprised of a range of office and light industrial uses, including general, medical, and professional offices; research laboratories; restaurants; commercial recreation facilities; and some retail and wholesale businesses. Service industrial uses are located to the north and northwest of the park and include two large indoor recreation facilities, the Sportsplex at Rockville and Rockville Ice Arena. Public Park uses are located to the northeast and

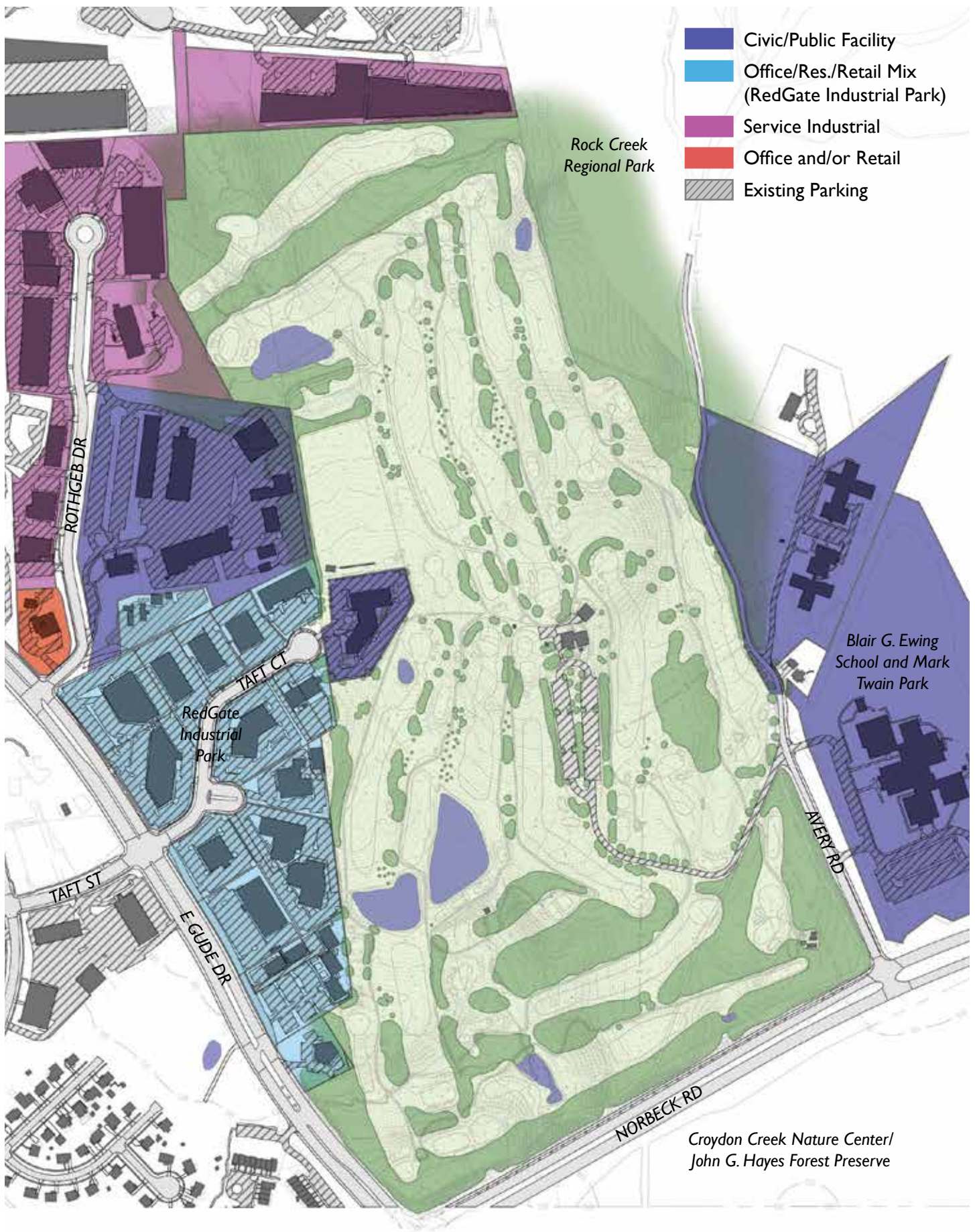
south with Rock Creek Regional Park and the Rockville Civic Center/Corydon Creek Nature Center.

While no residential uses currently exist in the RedGate Industrial Center, the Land Use Policy Map for Planning Area 17, included in the Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan, designates this area Office Residential Retail Mix (ORRM). This leaves the potential for more mixed-use in this area, adjacent to the park, should redevelopment of any of these parcels occur in the future.

The lack of residential development adjacent to the park has advantages and disadvantages. A disadvantage is that the uses that currently exist do little to activate or engage with the park. An advantage is that some potential park program elements would not be disruptive to adjacent residences, in terms of crowds, noise and/or lighting. Another advantage is that the surrounding uses to the west include significant surface parking lots that remain largely empty in the evenings and on weekends, when park usage will be greatest. There may be opportunities to partner with adjacent business and property owners to explore utilizing some of these parking areas during times of peak park usage.



The Adjacent RedGate Industrial Park Has Both Advantages and Disadvantages for the Park, Credit: Google



Adjacent Land Use

Park Edges

The park edges vary and are informed by the landform, adjacent uses, and the park's previous use as a golf course. For much of its perimeter, park edges are defined by woodlands. Along the northeast boundary, these woodlands are an extension of the woodlands associated with Rock Creek Regional Park; to the northwest, the woodlands are associated with a smaller tributary and its associated steep slopes. Similarly, a woodland buffer defines the southern boundary of the park and provides a buffer along Norbeck Road. Much of the western perimeter is characterized by the light industrial/office uses along the western perimeter. In some instances, the uses back onto the park and are heavily buffered with screen planting. In other instances, the office uses tend to have equal façade treatment on all sides and front onto and engage the park. The City maintenance yard has significant frontage on the park at the north end of the perimeter with limited buffering or screening. Portions of the eastern boundary have somewhat open edges that allow for views to and from uses across Avery Road.

The natural woodlands present a positive image for the park edges from both within and outside the park, and they lend a sense of seclusion and separation from adjacent land uses in some instances and a seamless connection in others (such as to Rock Creek Regional Park). In many instances, however, where uses directly abut the park property, the edges have been planted with landscape buffers. This deliberate screening/buffering can sometimes be a visual and physical barrier between the park and these adjacent uses. While these buffers are largely a function of the previous use of this property as a golf course, opportunities may exist to open up some of these edges and create stronger visual and/or physical connections so that the adjacent uses can better engage with the park, if appropriate.

Existing Character Areas

The landform, vegetation patterns, and existing developed area (clubhouse, parking and access drive) all help to define different character areas within the park. These existing character areas are spaces within the park that have a distinct set of characteristics and feel differentiated from surrounding park spaces. As a whole, these character areas create a dynamic experience for park visitors that changes both as they walk the park's path network and return to the park through the seasons.

As park programming is determined and site planning options are explored, it will be important to understand how these existing character areas can inform the site planning. Additional vegetation and/or landscape management practices can be utilized to accentuate the different character areas. Additionally, the location of pathways, roads and parking should take into consideration as to how they respond to and move through the different areas as well as to the spaces within these areas.

The existing character areas are broadly defined in the following categories and identified on the Existing Character Areas exhibit.

Arrival Experience: The existing driveway and parking area serves as a dramatic arrival experience as the tree-lined drive winds along and defines an open front lawn. Given that many park visitors arrive via car, this is the existing first impression of the park.

Front Lawn: The front lawn is defined by the existing entry driveway, parking lot, and clubhouse to the west. This area supports the arrival experience for those entering the park off of Avery Road by providing sweeping views across the space that serve as a welcoming invitation to the park and highlight its expansiveness. Viewed from above on the clubhouse deck, the front lawn provides an open foreground that allow for views across the park and beyond.

Rolling Meadow/Lawn: Previously uniformly maintained lawn areas translate into a combination of rolling meadows and low meadows in addition



Park Edges

to traditional open lawns, all of which knit the site together. Given the site's topography, much of the park has a rolling hillside character. In some areas, limited mow areas have generated sweeping meadows that cascade with the rolling topography. Elsewhere, centralized around the clubhouse, the rolling nature of the landform continues with actively mown lawns instead of the meadows. This shift between meadow and open lawn adds interest and character to the park by providing diversity to the vegetation and defines zones for certain activities.

Low Meadow: The area along Avery Road has similarities to the rolling meadow character area with its rolling terrain and meadow vegetation, but it is distinct in its overall context within the site. The hillside and forest patch east of the clubhouse separate this area from the rest of the park to create the sense of a distinct zone along Avery Road. Additionally, the stream running along Avery Road and its associated vegetation typical is low/wet areas, accentuates the character of this space.

Open Forest: The northern and southern sections are defined by woodlands that are fragmented by former fairways. These "open forest" areas are where significant stands of trees define spaces but allow views through into other spaces. Passing through the open forest gives the impression of going in and out of a dense woodland while

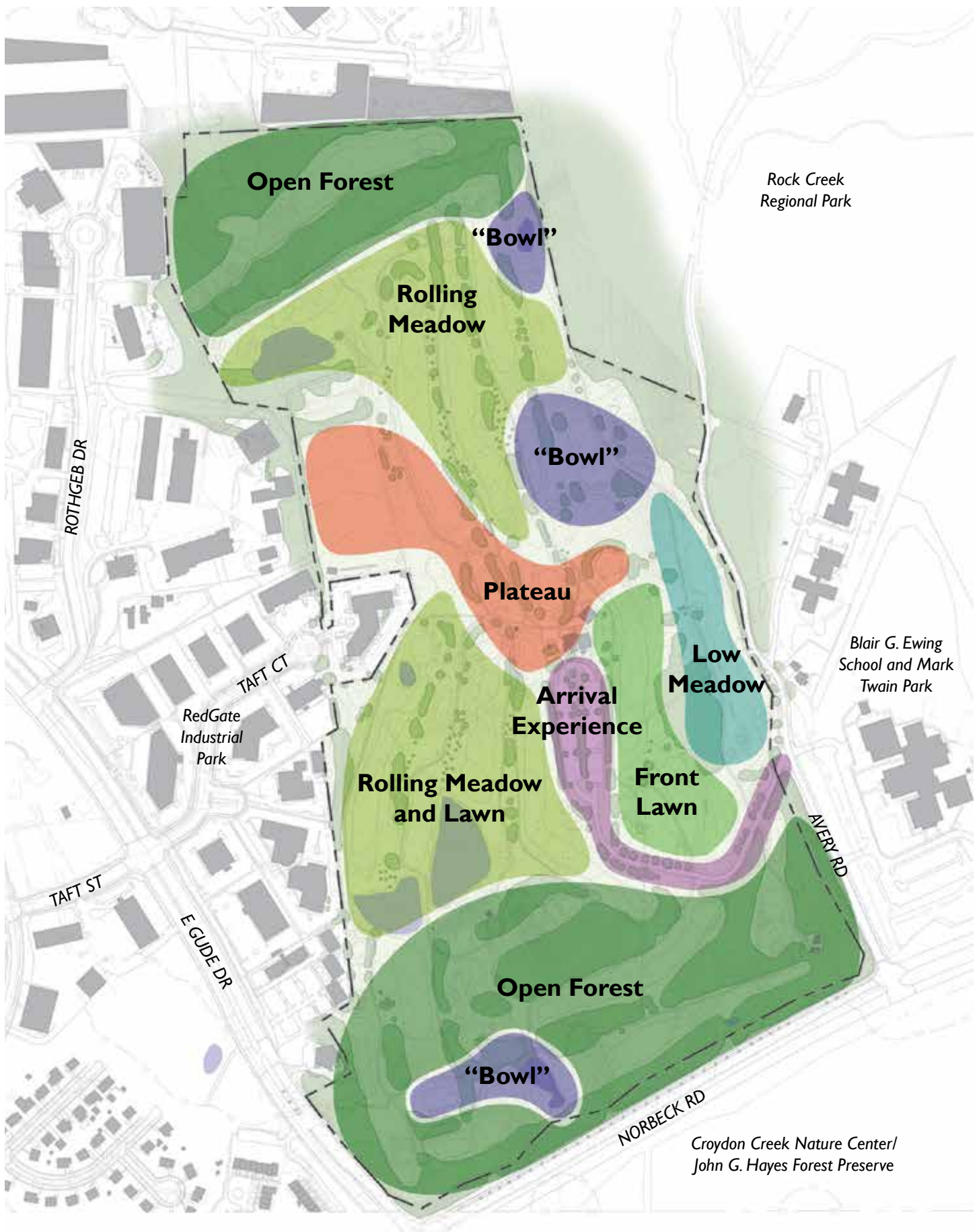
passing through a series of outdoor rooms or forest clearings.

Bowl: These areas are distinct in that they are defined by the topography as a natural bowl. Hillsides on all sides create the sense of a natural inward-facing enclosure that defines a space at the center. The result is a more intimate moment within the broader park itself. The area to the south end of the park is unique in that a stream runs through the area. In this area, the open forest and bowl characters of the site overlap and complement each other. To the north, a smaller bowl is centered around a stormwater management pond that is slated to be decommissioned, a series of steep hillsides, and canopy opening.

Plateau: The high ground in the center of the site is a plateau that affords views to the entire park and beyond. This area is generally flatter than other areas of the park and has a distinct character in the absence of the rolling hillsides and tree canopy found elsewhere. This area has a greater sense of "openness" because of its elevation, relatively flat topography, and broad views across the park.



Rolling Meadows Have Replaced Many of the Maintained Lawn Areas of the Former Golf Course



Existing Character Areas

“Outdoor Rooms” / Spaces

In addition to broader character areas, the combination of landform, vegetation, and fairways associated with the golf course further subdivides the park into smaller spaces or “outdoor rooms” within the different character areas. Some of these rooms are associated with higher ground and have expansive views of the entire park, while others are associated with low areas and are very inward oriented with a strong sense of enclosure. As the program is developed for the park, this division of spaces presents an opportunity to create separation among distinct program elements. It also presents an opportunity to curate a park user’s experience as they move from one room to the next.



Steep Hillsides, Existing Vegetation, Built Features Divide the Park into Small Spaces or “Outdoor Rooms”



"Outdoor Rooms" / Spaces

Buildable Areas

“Buildable areas” are those areas of the park where development of significant park program elements can occur, as grading, construction, and other impacts are not prohibited by environmental and regulatory constraints such as wetlands, floodplains, stream buffers, forest conservation easements, and steep slopes. Based upon the environmental and regulatory constraints described in this report, which comprise approximately 38 acres, a balance of approximately 93 acres remain from the total of 131 acres to be considered for park development. It is important to note that while the land may be technically buildable, other factors such as the presence of existing trees (not protected within a forest conservation easement), unique landforms, the existing character and the existing qualities of the space, should be taken into consideration to determine what type of park development is appropriate. Additionally, low impact improvements such as pathway connections, boardwalks, observation platforms, and signage may be permitted within some of the environmentally constrained areas for nature-based programming.

NON-BUILDABLE AREA

Non-Buildable Area (Stream Buffer, Slopes >25%, Forest Conservation Easement, Stormwater Management Ponds)	+/- 38.5 acres
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Sub-total Non-Buildable Area +/- 38.5 acres

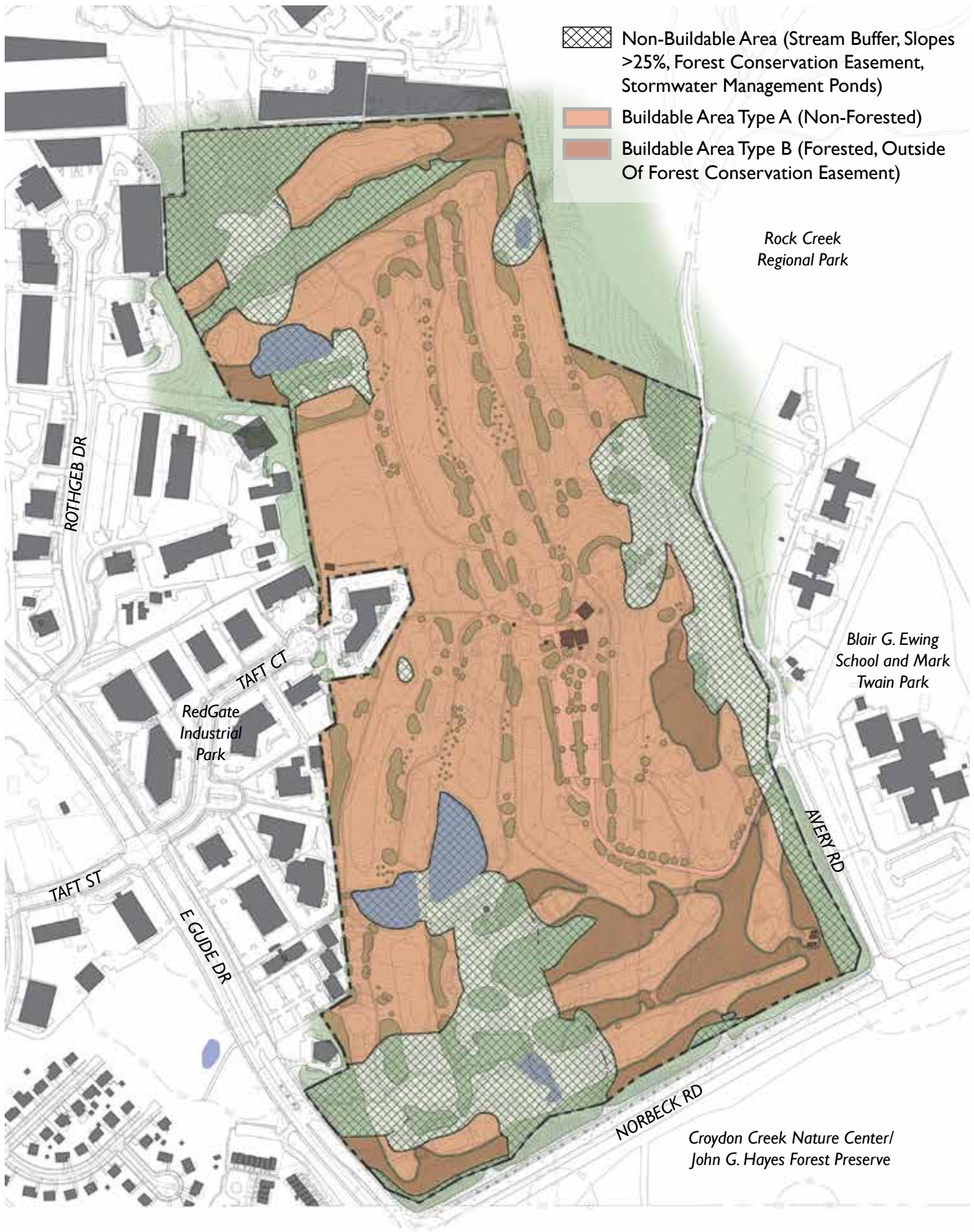
BUILDABLE AREA

Type A (Non-Forested)	+/- 82.0 acres
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Type B (Forested, Outside Of Forest Conservation Easement)	+/- 10.5 acres
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Sub-total Buildable Area	+/- 92.5 acres
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TOTAL	+/- 131 acres
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Buildable Areas

Conclusion

The existing conditions described in this report, combined with existing and forthcoming community input, will serve as the foundation for the development of alternative concept plans showing how RedGate Park can sensitively accommodate both passive and active programming. As alternative concepts plans are developed, the following questions should be considered, but not limited to:

1. How can the concept plans best address the system-wide and RedGate Park-specific needs and priorities identified in the Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan?
2. How can the existing landform guide the location of program elements so that site grading can be done sensitively in a way that reinforces the landform?
3. How can environmental features not only be protected but enhanced throughout the site, maximizing opportunities for increased awareness of their benefits?
4. How can existing regulated ponds, used to meet water quantity and pre- 2009 quality management requirements, be best integrated into the overall park design to maximize their aesthetic as well as functional value?
5. Should all non-regulated ponds be decommissioned so that the space can be used for new park elements or Environmental Site Design facilities?
6. How can Environmental Site Design facilities used to meet current stormwater management requirements be incorporated into the overall landscape to serve as both aesthetic and educational resources?
7. Because all new development is subject to the Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE) new 2009 Environmental Site Design regulations (which requires smaller/micro facilities), is it practical to try to utilize the existing ponds for new development, recognizing it may require an extensive review and coordination process?
8. What additional studies/assessments will need to be completed once there is an understanding of the preferred program elements?
9. What connections (both physical and visual) to surrounding land uses are important to provide for? What connections should be buffered or discouraged?
10. How can the existing internal pedestrian circulation network be adapted to provide for greater accessibility to or within all areas of the park? Which non-accessible pathways should remain, and which should be removed? How should vehicular access be provided to areas that cannot be reached by accessible pathways but can accommodate accessible pathways within?
11. How can ADA access and universal site design opportunities be integrated into the design of the park?
12. How can the unique character of different areas within the park be protected and accentuated? How can they inform which program elements are appropriate for different areas within the park?
13. How is the need for protecting natural spaces balanced with the need for increased active facilities and uses?
14. Which existing outdoor "rooms" and spaces, largely defined by the golf course fairway design, should be protected and reinforced? Which should be altered to better relate to potential program elements?
15. Which areas of the park are appropriate for the greatest change and which areas are appropriate for the least amount of change?

