

RECREATION AND PARKS

Vision

Rockville will continue to have a vibrant, beautiful, and easily-accessible park system with a wide variety of recreation facilities and programs, as this system is critical to supporting the health and well-being of the people of Rockville and its natural environment. Parks and recreation facilities will meet the needs and desires of Rockville's diverse users.

Rockville's first public park was a triangle of land in front of the Red Brick Courthouse formed by Commerce Lane and Montgomery Avenue. Through all of the changes to downtown Rockville over the decades, the site remains a park today (at left). Now part of Courthouse Square Park, it is the closest open space for residents living in Town Center, including the apartments just across the street.



Through its Recreation and Parks Department, the City of Rockville owns and maintains more than 1,100 acres of parkland and provides a wide variety of active and passive park and recreation facilities that are available to Rockville residents. Community centers and other indoor facilities provide recreation space and meeting rooms that host myriad cultural and educational programs that enrich the social lives of Rockville residents. Parklands also conserve sensitive environments along the city's stream valleys, which provide critical habitat and places for quiet enjoyment of nature.

Rockville's park system includes a number of specialized facilities that play a large role in community life, with the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center (RSFC) and the Senior Center being especially prominent. Cultural facilities in our parks include the Glenview Mansion and F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater. Recent investments show the City's commitment to maintaining the quality of its facilities even as it plans for new growth, which is especially important in areas experiencing a change in land use that brings new residents. Partnerships with Montgomery County government, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), and Montgomery

College are crucial to providing recreation opportunities for city residents and visitors, as well.

The Recreation and Parks Department maintains a strategic plan, last adopted in December 2020, that is consistent with the policies contained in this Element, but is an implementation document intended to be updated regularly. It provides an inventory and analysis of the City's programs, parks, and open spaces and recommends strategies for the provision of these programs and services.

Summary of Community Input

Residents consistently state that the high-quality parks in Rockville are a major reason the city is such a good place to live. During the Rockville 2040 Listening Sessions and Citywide Forums, participants expressed this appreciation very clearly, discussing the many ways that they enjoyed the park system. They also expressed that certain parks seem underutilized, sometimes because of accessibility challenges; while other portions of the city are deficient in park space, such as parts of the Twinbrook neighborhood and in the urbanizing redevelopment areas in Town Center and along Rockville Pike.

Goals for Rockville's recreation and park system:

1. Provide neighborhood parks and recreation facilities that are easily accessible to residents by foot, bicycle or other transport.
2. Develop new park space in growth areas.
3. Promote active recreation and social life at community centers and special facilities with programming that serves the whole community in an equitable and inclusive manner.
4. Conserve key environmental areas.
5. Maintain and promote our parks.
6. Partner with Montgomery County government, M-NCPPC, and the private sector to serve Rockville's recreation needs.

Participants said that the city's parks are generally well maintained, but that some could use better lighting or improvements, with repeated mention that the RSFC would benefit by investments to upgrade the facility. Residents of all ages, including youth and seniors, expressed a desire for "more things to do" in Rockville, including in the park system, and many specific ideas were raised in that regard.

GOAL 1

Provide neighborhood parks and recreation facilities that are easily accessible to city residents by foot, bicycle, or other transport.

Rockville's park system is comprised of more than 60 parks in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, and functions. One measure of the system's effectiveness and value to residents is proximity, or accessibility. The City seeks to provide neighborhood scale parks within easy walking distance of every residence.

Larger scale parks, such as the Civic Center Park, and major recreation facilities are used by residents from all parts of the city. This Plan promotes access by bicycle and other non-motorized transport supported by access to citywide trails.

Given that the city and its park system are mature and largely built out, it is important to retain the parks that the city has, including open space and recreation facilities provided by our partners at the County. One strategy for improving and expanding access and facilities is to add to existing parks when and where possible, especially in those areas that are deemed to be under-served.

Policy 1

Provide a public park or recreation facility within a ten-minute walk of every residence in the city.

Neighborhood parks are most beneficial when they are within easy walk distance. The presence of a public park across the street or within a block or two is a critical amenity for a residential neighborhood, both for its utility as an open space and in terms of neighborhood cohesion, identity, and social

life. Playgrounds are very popular spaces for families, and dog parks also serve as neighborhood gathering places. Parks are useful markers for identifying locations and navigating the city. In keeping with other goals to reduce traffic, pollution, and promote healthy lifestyles, providing parks within walking distance of residential uses is a priority for the City.

Actions

1.1 Analyze park distance and access issues on a regular basis and as residential uses are planned and developed in new areas of the city.

1.2 Identify opportunities to add new park entrances and paths to improve access to existing parks.

1.3 Improve access to recreational facilities from neighborhoods and commercial areas.

1.4 Identify and acquire properties as they become available to fulfill critical parks needs to address park deficiencies.

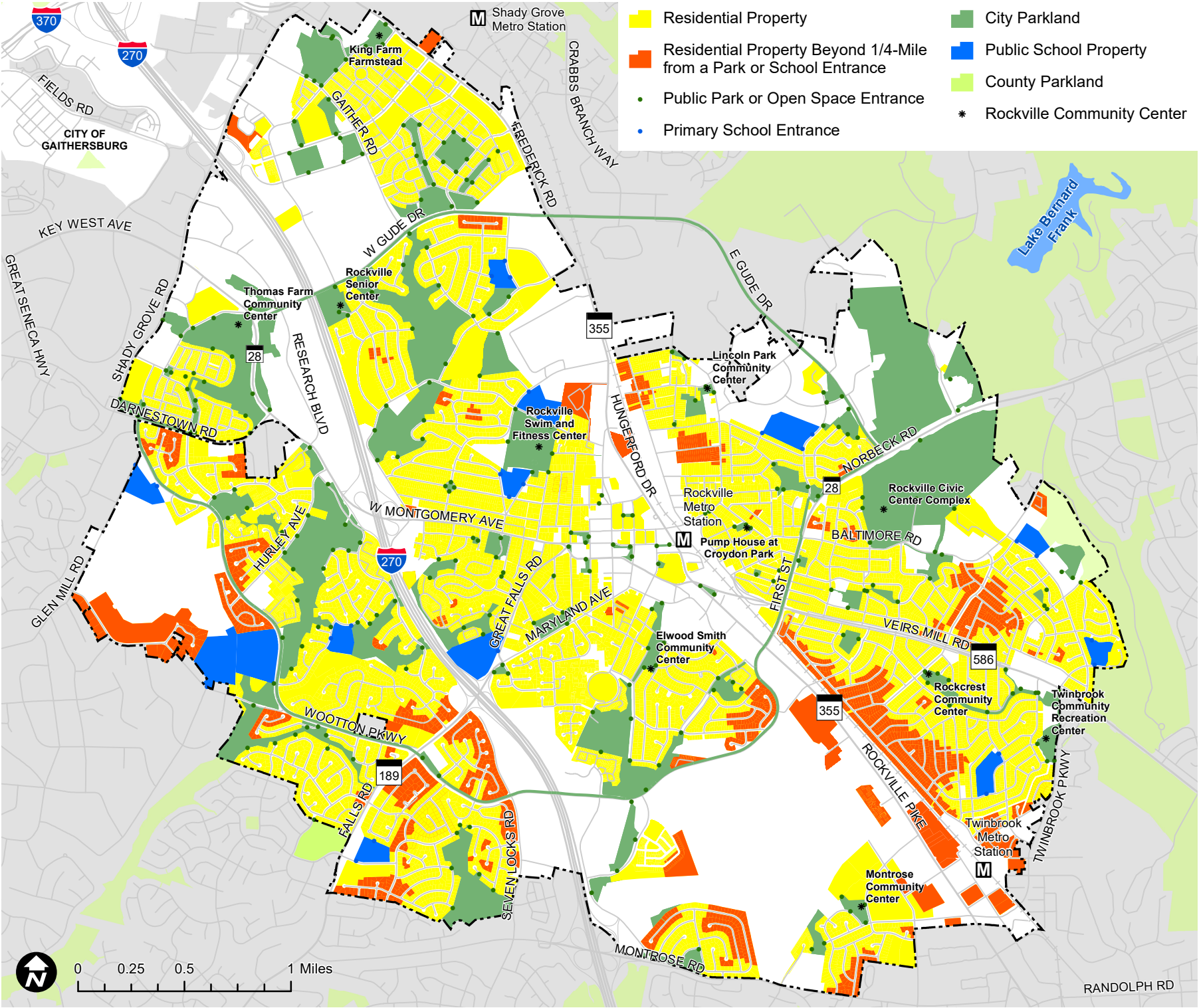
1.5 Create new parks in areas of the city that do not meet the policy standard.

1.6 Recognize that development density in relation to the presence and size of parks is a crucial factor in determining adequacy.



Rockville's Swim and Fitness Center includes a 'sprayground' popular with young children.

Figure 16: Five- to Ten-Minute Walk Analysis to Publicly Accessible Park Entrances



The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends a standard to locate a public open space within a half-mile walk of residential uses. The analysis shown above measured the proximity of park entrances to residential uses within a quarter mile. Residential parcels that are more than a quarter mile from a park entrance are shown in orange. The analysis includes accessible portions of public schools and County-owned parks because these open spaces provide recreational facilities that complement the City’s park system. In a number of locations, the lack of easy access to parks that are within a quarter mile, ‘as the crow flies,’ points to issues with the public right-of-way system where connections are not easily made due to street layouts or a lack of a pedestrian easement in a more direct route.

Policy 2

Expand and connect a network of multiple-use trails to provide safe access to city, County, and regional parks in the Rockville area.

Bicycles are a great way to access parks that are beyond an easy walk, in particular specialized facilities such as pools, community centers, and larger active recreation parks that are not available in every neighborhood. Bicycle riding, roller skating and skateboarding are popular recreation activities in themselves supported by City and regional trail facilities.

The citywide 1993 master plan included a proposed bikeway system that recommended completing a trail circling the city, which became Rockville's Carl Henn Millennium Trail. Connections to regional trails and crosstown bikeways are outlined in the 2017 Bikeway Master Plan. Providing non-motorized access to regional parks is important for accessing the large parks that protect environmental features in and just outside the city.

Actions

2.1 Identify gaps and expand the distribution of multi-use trails.

2.2 Connect future parks, wherever possible, with existing local and regional park systems to provide continuous greenways.

2.3 Work with other jurisdictions to enhance connections to non-City park and recreation facilities.

2.4 Construct connecting multi-use paths consistent with the Transportation Element and the Bikeway Master Plan.

2.5 Consider the impact of any new park connection on natural resources and critical environmental areas.

2.6 Plan for and promote park access via non-vehicular modes.

2.7 Plan for and promote equal access for all types of users, including for persons of all abilities and mobilities.

2.8 Provide bicycle parking at all parks, as appropriate, that is conveniently available and clearly signed.

City of Rockville Comprehensive Plan



Shared use paths offer the opportunity for users of all ages and modes to move through the city without riding along busy streets.



Rockville is committed to providing the opportunity for outdoor activity for all age groups and levels of ability.

Policy 3

Ensure no net loss of parkland.

The City is committed to a no-net-loss policy, which is primarily addressed to parks classified as being at-risk due to their status as leased park space, planned school sites, and MCPS active playgrounds on school sites. Rockville has a Park Zone category in its ordinance which provides strong protection for parks on property owned by the City.

Actions

- 3.1 Continue to categorize parkland owned by the City of Rockville as ‘Park Zone’ under the zoning ordinance (25.14.06).
- 3.2 Seek to add new parkland in the general vicinity of properties leased by the City for park use that are owned by MCPS and Montgomery County government in order to maintain park access if these properties are converted to other uses. *(See also Action 6.5 of the Community Facilities Element)*
- 3.3 Retain all of RedGate Park (the former RedGate Municipal Golf Course) as some type of park resource open and available to residents. *(See also Action 25.1 of the Land Use Element and Project 1 of Planning Area 17)*



Hillcrest Park in the Twinbrook neighborhood is representative of a neighborhood park that combine active facilities with large open spaces.

Policy 4

Add to existing parks, in areas with park deficiencies, when contiguous parcels become available for sale.

A good strategy to adding parks in existing, older neighborhoods is to have a policy that allows for the acquisition of parcels that are contiguous with existing parks. As an example, the City purchased a single lot with a house immediately adjacent to Isreal Park in Lincoln Park in 2017. The house was demolished to make room for additional vehicle parking for the park and community center. This policy and strategy are useful to make existing parks larger where the original subdivision provided smaller open spaces.

Actions

- 4.1 Acquire properties for park additions when opportunities arise.

GOAL 2

Develop new park space in growth areas.

For many decades, Rockville added parkland as previously undeveloped large land areas were annexed into the city and developed. Through that mechanism, including Rockville’s requirements, wonderful parks were created in, among other neighborhoods, North Farm, Potomac Woods, Falls Grove and King Farm.

Recent and future population growth is different. It is occurring mostly on land already within the city, and that was previously developed for commercial use. The parcels now being developed are nowhere near the size of neighborhood-scale development, such as the 254-acre Falls Grove project. The largest current projects do not exceed 30 acres, and most are on parcels smaller than 5 acres. As a result, producing large-scale parks will not be possible as part of redevelopment. Nonetheless, population growth is significant, and focused in areas where there is either a deficiency of parkland (the Rockville Pike corridor) or where the park spaces are small and/or insufficient for the expanding mixed-use environment (Town Center). Furthermore, the density of development is higher than previous eras of growth, because

the large majority of new housing units is projected to be in multiple-unit structures.

The Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan (p. 4-37, 2016), which remains part of this Comprehensive Plan, identifies the need for at least ten acres of new parkland in the corridor, with at least two of those acres to be located in the South Pike as urban-style parks. The remaining acreage, and more if possible, should be a larger park that can accommodate sports and other field-based recreation activities.

Policy 5

Create public and publicly-accessible private parks to serve new development, especially where land use change will lead to a shortage of park space within easy walking distance.

One of the most pressing challenges for the City is to plan and develop new parks in major growth areas. In the nearly two decades since the completion of the Town Center Master Plan, 1,940 residential units were added, with another 470 approved, for a total of 2,410 additional dwelling units in Town Center. The only park space added to Town Center during this growth is Town Square Park, completed in 2006. New residents can be seen walking their dogs around Courthouse Square Park, but a larger open space is needed. Surface parking used in the past for Rockville's Hometown Holidays will be developed in coming years, requiring a reconfiguration of the annual event. Given this situation, this Plan recommends creating new park space in the Town Center as a top priority.

A similar situation is found in the south Pike near the Twinbrook Metro station. Nearly 1,500 dwelling units have been added since 2000 in the station area, but no new public open space. The Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan (2016) recommends developing ten acres of new park space in the Pike corridor. This need will become critical as new development brings thousands of new residents near the Twinbrook Metro station. In addition to parks and plazas, the Pike Plan calls for a major park with active recreation facilities.

For larger development or redevelopment sites, park and open space can be built and maintained by the private

developer or land owner. Such privately developed, publicly accessible parks and open spaces can serve the same function as a City park without the need for land dedication to the City and at lower levels of public investment.

Actions

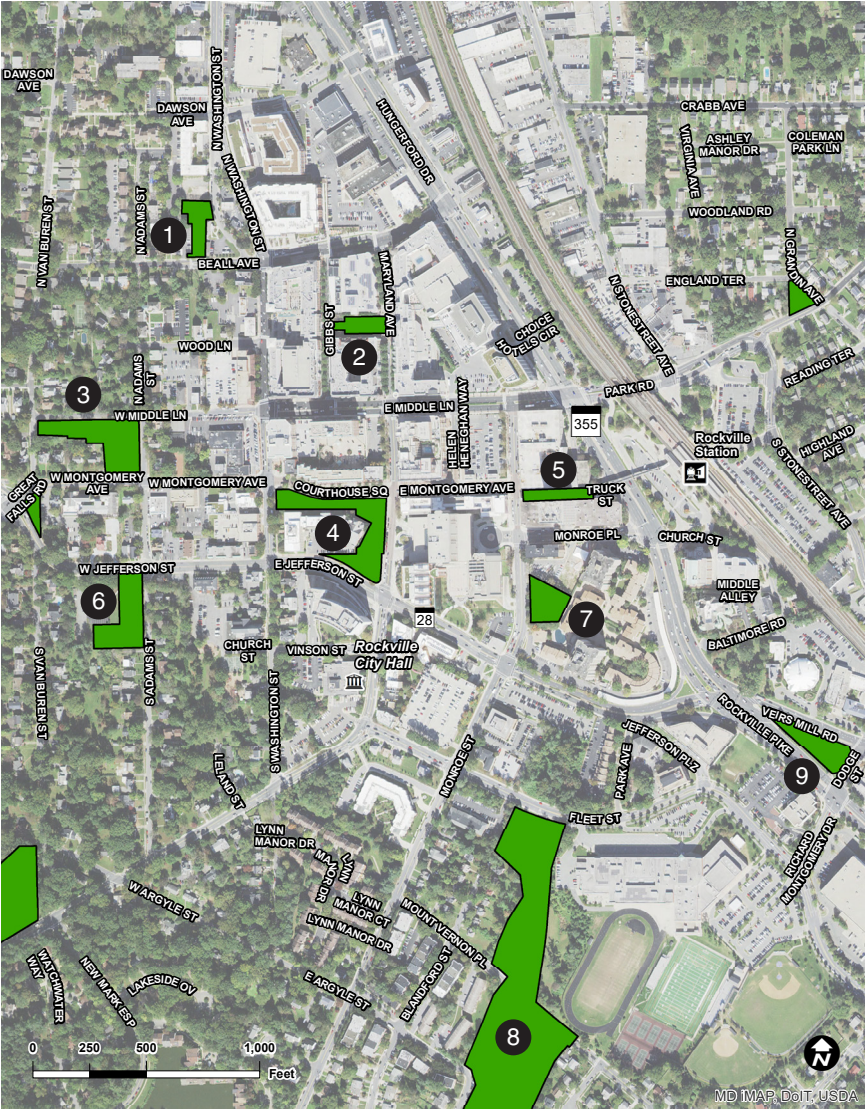
- 5.1 Plan for a new Town Center park of sufficient size to host community wide gatherings and events, and provide adequate open space for a growing Town Center population.
- 5.2 Plan for a major new park to serve population growth in the southern portion of Rockville Pike and the Twinbrook Metro station area.
- 5.3 Acquire and create parkland as part of new and large-scale development projects.
- 5.4 Seek opportunities to create new parkland in locations identified by the Potential Future Public Park asterisk on the Land Use Policy Maps in Figure 3 of the Land Use Element and in Planning Areas 1, 9, and 11.
- 5.5 Seek opportunities to incentivize large development projects to provide privately developed, publicly accessible park and open space beyond what is required as a minimum by City code, in return for greater density, intensity, or other project benefits.

Policy 6

Establish a park development fund for acquisition, design, and construction of new parks or enhancements to existing parks.

Creating parkland and other publicly accessible community spaces in redevelopment areas is challenging, because space and high costs make site assembly difficult. The City should seek new financing approaches to creating new parks, especially when dedication of property is not available or will not result in a sufficient size warranted for a park. A park development fund could receive funds through many avenues, including "fee-in-lieu" payments received as part of development projects, impact fees, budgeted amounts from City general or capital funds, creating special taxing districts, and grants and/or donations.

Figure 17: Town Center Parks



Park space is superimposed in green over an aerial photograph to show the location and size of City parks in Town Center. Numeric labels correspond to information on each park listed in the table at right. The largest park is Elwood Smith which has a walking trail along the upper reach of Cabin John Creek. The next three parks over one acre are historic properties rather than neighborhood parks. Taken together, there is a shortage of park space to serve the growing population.

Town Center Park Space		
Name	Acres	Park Type
1 Kinship Park*	0.31	Neighborhood
2 Town Center Park Plaza	0.40	Citywide
3 Beall-Dawson Historic Park	2.90	Citywide
4 Courthouse Square Park	1.50	Citywide
5 Promenade Area/Park	0.18	Neighborhood
6 Jacquilin Trelis Williams Park	1.06	Neighborhood
7 James Monroe Park	0.75	Neighborhood
8 Elwood Smith Park	7.50	Neighborhood
9 Veterans Park	0.77	Citywide
Total acreage	15.37	
* Note: Kinship Park is leased space.		



Town Square Park hosts events and visitors in downtown Rockville, as well as serving as open space for the surrounding development.

Another option available to the City of Rockville is to use new tax revenues generated by redevelopment projects to fund park development in that area through tax increment financing (TIF), or some other action to dedicate funds from tax-generating properties served by the new park.

Actions

6.1 Deposit any park and open space fee-in-lieu payments into the park development fund as part of a process for developing public parks.

6.2 Explore contributing City funds toward the creation of a park development fund. Potential funding sources include an annual budget line item, grant awards, municipal bonds, and/or a change in the City's Financial Management Policy to allow transfer of a portion of reserve funds above a certain threshold into the fund on an annual basis.

6.3 Explore the feasibility of utilizing special assessment districts or tax increment financing (TIF) to fund park development in major population growth areas, such as the Town Center and Rockville Pike.

6.4 Seek tax deductible donations and grants to assist in capitalizing the park fund.

6.5 Seek State and other funds to supplement this effort.

6.6 Define metrics and standards for park dedication for large development projects, and provide an option for dedication of land and/or a fee-in-lieu payment.

GOAL 3

Promote active recreation and social life at community centers and special facilities with programming that serves the whole community in an equitable and inclusive manner.

While the quick access provided by neighborhood parks is important, active recreation and team sports requires larger sites with major playfields and facilities. Community centers provide indoor recreation spaces that are used year round, but are particularly crucial during the winter months. Meeting

rooms are used for classes as well as community gatherings.

Key issues associated with active recreation and facilities include:

- Access to major recreation facilities and community centers in new growth areas;
- Park programming for sports and classes as demographics and interests change;
- Uncertain trends in sport popularity and the use of outdoor space in response to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21; and
- Continued investment in specialized facilities.

Policy 7

Maintain and invest in Rockville's community centers as places to foster health and wellness, neighborhood cohesion and social life, equity, and environmental stewardship.

Community centers with indoor recreation facilities play an important role in the social life of Rockville. They provide active recreation space in gymnasiums and rooms with exercise machines, as well as rooms that can be reserved for neighborhood meetings and gatherings. The Recreation and Parks Department also programs hundreds of different types of activities for residents of all ages, from gardening classes to basic computer trainings, dance to martial arts and swim classes, and much more. Numerous single events are hosted by our facilities. Summer camp for school age Rockville children are an annual rite, keeping kids active and engaged at playgrounds and centers around the city.

Rockville seniors have a full menu of activities from which to choose, many located at the Rockville Senior Center. Results from the 2016 Senior Citizen Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis found strong support for continued use of neighborhood community centers as satellite locations for senior programs and services with the Senior Center as a hub.

The City completed a major renovation to the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center in 2020, adding indoor space and renovating the lobby and locker rooms. The work is part of the City's ongoing efforts to accommodate growing demands for the city's recreation amenities while providing modern

and accessible facilities for Rockville residents and visitors.

During the Rockville 2040 public engagement effort, the Rockville community expressed an interest in planning for additional or expanded community centers in the city's growth areas, including the Shady Grove Road corridor, west of I-270, downtown Rockville, and the Rockville Pike corridor (See Figure 18 for the city's existing community centers). Montrose Community Center is the closest to the southern Rockville Pike area, and possible expansion to offer a wider variety of activities is recommended (See Planning Area 10: Montrose and North Farm).

In 2018, the City retained a consultant, Eureka Facts, to evaluate the community's level of support for constructing a new community recreation center in Rockville, west of I-270 and south of Hurley Avenue, and if supported, identify the best location and amenities for the new center. The study results indicated moderate community support for a new recreation center and/or improving existing facilities.

Actions

7.1 Ensure equity of access in program and park/facility distribution throughout Rockville.

7.2 Seek to provide community centers that will reach all neighborhoods and serve all age groups.

7.3 Study the need for additional community and recreation centers in currently under-served areas, including on the west side of I-270 south of Hurley Avenue.

7.4 Plan for new major active recreation facilities in growth areas.

7.5 Continue to regularly reinvent community center facilities and programming to meet changing needs and emerging trends.

7.6 Retrofit existing community and recreation centers for energy efficiency and design new facilities using sustainable and universal building design principles.

Policy 8

Continue to invest in our specialized park and recreation facilities and update long-term facility plans.

Some of the City's unique park and recreation facilities include the King Farm Farmstead, the Pump House at Croydon Park, Rockville Civic Center (and Glenview Mansion), and RedGate Park, among others. These facilities require special attention due to their historic, natural, and/or cultural significance to the Rockville community, and should be maintained at the same level of quality and service as the City's modern community facilities. For more on these special facilities, see the City projects and policy recommendations in each Planning Area.

Actions

8.1 Periodically update long-term facility plans for the City's unique park and recreation facilities and ensure adequate investment to ensure they serve the Rockville community at the same high level as the City's 'modern' facilities.

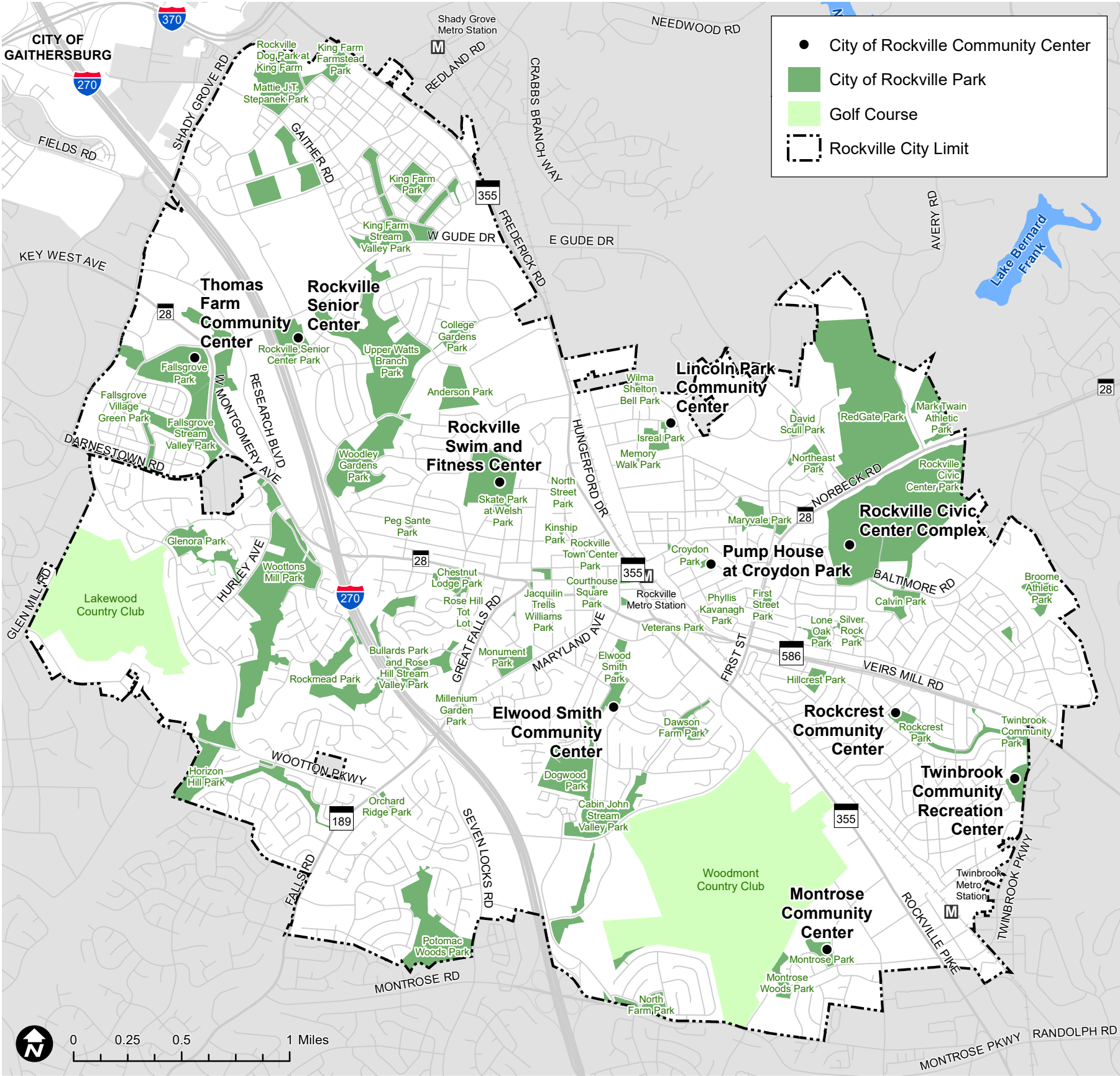
8.2 Design, develop, and maximize the use of RedGate Park as a community asset and a regional destination.

8.3 Redevelop King Farm Farmstead to balance its existing historic amenities with newer cultural and recreation offerings.



Team sports are played throughout the spring, summer, and fall on a number of ballfields. The image above is at Welsh Park.

Figure 18: Community Centers and Parkland



8.4 Evaluate the viability of a multi-generational community facility focused on new recreational programming, performing arts, and cultural offerings.

Policy 9

Consider recreation trends and demographic changes when planning and programming athletic facilities and amenities.

Park programming is evaluated continuously to meet the needs of residents and adjust to changing trends in popular sports. Rockville's diversity, and our embrace of immigrants from around the globe, is evident in the growing popularity of sports such as cricket, futsal, bocce, field hockey, lacrosse, rugby, and pickleball. Soccer has surged as an American sport and the provision of rectangular fields is as important as baseball diamonds, while the popularity of tennis has fluctuated. Changing interests in outdoor sports and the use of outdoor space occurred during the public health emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Whether the trends of increased outdoor recreation and the need for socially distant team and indoor sports remains to be seen. Adjustments to facilities will be considered to meet the city's changing demand.

Overall, the City's athletic and recreation facilities and amenities should always be designed to ensure equity, inclusiveness, and a recognition of diversity.

Actions

9.1 Study, on a regular basis, the utilization of active park spaces and athletic facilities, such as playfields and courts, to determine the extent to which existing facilities are being used or if there is demand for new types of facilities geared to specific sports. Ensure that active park spaces serve the needs of all age, culture, and identity interests throughout the city.

9.2 Provide opportunities for emerging sports and activities.

9.3 Continue to set park and activity fees that are consistent with the City's cost-recovery requirements and affordable to the full range of Rockville residents.

9.4 Seek opportunities for a major new facility that will act as a regional attraction, for instance an amphitheater or arboretum.

Policy 10

Strengthen cultural, educational, and social programming at community centers and parks.



Rockville's Senior Center is an active facility dedicated to serving those who are aged 60 and older within and around the Rockville community.



Lincoln Park Community Center is one of Rockville's most popular community facilities, providing community meeting space and after-school programs for neighborhood students.



Indoor and specialized outdoor recreation facilities provide the opportunity for vigorous exercise. A variety of fitness training classes are available. Team sports offer both exercise and social interaction.

GOAL 4

Conserve key environmental areas.

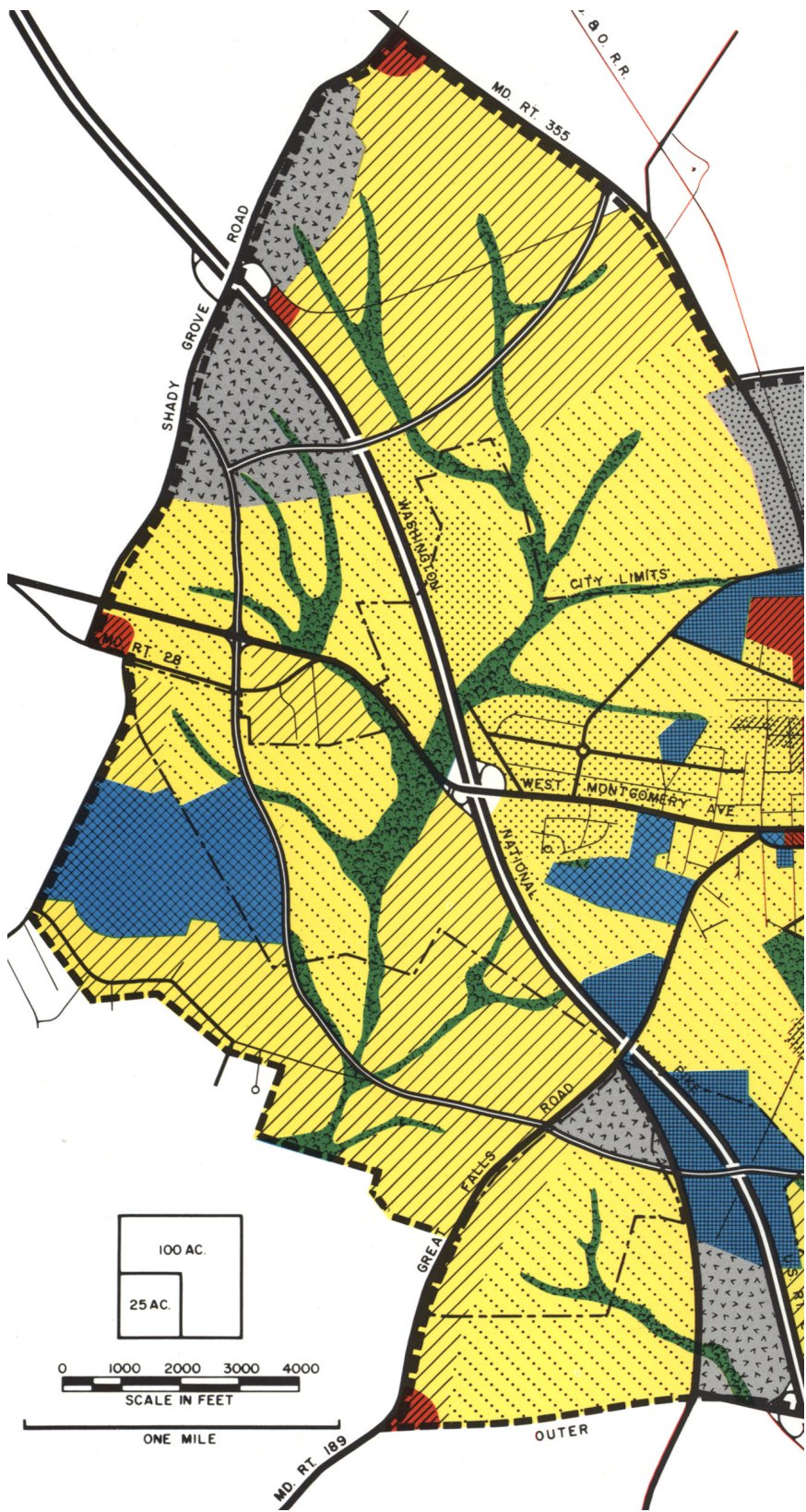
Since the beginning of master planning in Rockville, the land use plan and park recommendations have identified stream valleys as areas to be conserved as public open space dedicated to conservation. Protection of steep slopes from development is good planning and avoids erosion that can impact water quality in streams. Because steep slopes could not be plowed or planted during the days of active agriculture in the Rockville area, stream banks and slopes helped to maintain some forest cover.



Rockville's stream valley parks help protect water quality and provide natural open space for residents and visitors.

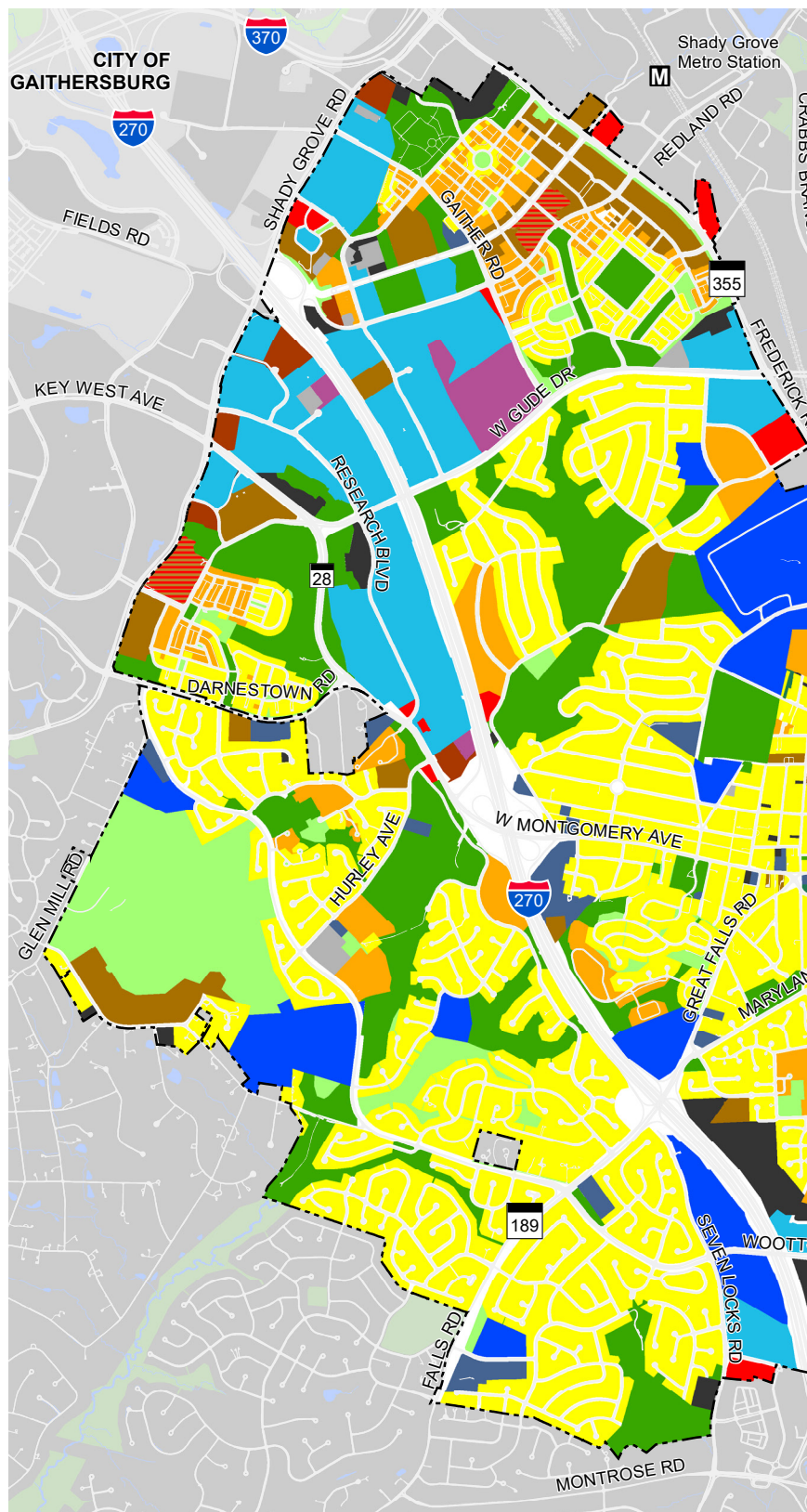
1960 Land Use Plan

Green tendrils on the plan show an intention to conserve land along stream valleys as the city expanded to the west and north.



2018 Existing Land Use

Green areas show the vision of the 1960 Plan realized with the City owning substantial park and open space buffers along stream valleys.



Policy 11

Value the important conservation role that Rockville's parks play in protecting steep slopes, streams, wildlife corridors, and forests.

Today, public parkland provides the best contiguous and connected woods in the city, which provides critical environment corridors, or greenways, for plant species and the movement of animals. This conservation role of City parks is recognized and reinforced by Plan policies. Acquisition of a five-acre parcel in 2017 added to Woottons Mill Park and the greenway protecting that part of the Watts Branch woods and stream corridor. Further acquisition or dedication of steep slopes and stream bottom land on the upper reaches of Watts Branch in King Farm, east of Piccard Drive, is recommended by this Plan. While the topography protects this land from development, adding it to the park system would allow for public access and forest management, with the potential for other enhancements. Additional policies on conservation are included in the Environment Element.

Actions

- 11.1 Identify and designate sensitive environmental areas in Rockville parks as conservation areas.
- 11.2 Seek opportunities to enhance and connect a network of open spaces and greenways.
- 11.3 Promote environmental awareness, education, stewardship, and the value of parks as a natural resource.
- 11.4 Protect native flora and fauna in our parks system, and plant locally sourced native plants when possible.
- 11.5 Evaluate the landscape plans for each park on a regular basis, specifically in regard to the extent of mowed turf, and maintain as much space as possible in a non-mowed or natural condition, to cut maintenance costs and the impacts of mowing.

GOAL 5

Maintain and promote our parks.

The City of Rockville is the largest land owner and property manager in the community, with over 1,100 acres maintained by the Department of Recreation and Parks. Keeping our parks in peak condition is important to the overall appearance, safety, and livability of our neighborhoods and activity centers.

Policy 12

Maintain City recreation and park facilities at the highest standards for safety, cleanliness, environmental sustainability, and user experience.

Rockville will maintain its parks and recreation facilities, even as plans are made to expand the system to serve new needs and residents.

Actions

12.1 Continue maintenance of existing parks as a priority, provide sufficient budget resources as the system grows, and research and employ best management practices.

12.2 Continue to perform routine safety inspections and maintenance of athletic facilities, playfields, and play equipment.

12.3 Monitor the urban forest for environmental and biological impacts from plant pathologies, invasive insects, and climate change.

12.4 Develop effective strategies to manage the impact of deer and other wildlife on the forest understory.



Recreation and Parks staff work all year to maintain Rockville’s active recreation facilities. The pitching mound at Walter Johnson Field in Dogwood Park (above, top) is carefully prepared for another season of play on Rockville’s premier baseball diamond. The soccer field lines at Mark Twain Athletic Park are being set (above, bottom) with specialized field equipment. Even Rockville’s woods (opposite page) are maintained to ensure damaged or downed trees are not a hazard to woodland trail users.

Policy 13

Develop a unique identity for Rockville Recreation and Parks facilities.

Actions

13.1 Build a stand-alone brand identity for the Recreation and Parks Department to tell its story and increase community awareness and participation.

13.2 Update facility signage to create branding with a readily identifiable logo that enhances awareness and improves both wayfinding and recognition of City park and facilities.

13.3 Ensure that new park logo and signs conform with overall branding for the City.

Policy 14

Maintain and regularly update the Strategic Plan for the City's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.

In order to anticipate needs and maintain a large park system it is necessary for the Department of Recreation and Parks to conduct long range planning for its parkland, programs, and facilities. The City of Rockville Recreation and Parks Department Strategic Plan, last adopted in December



2020, provides a 'road map' for addressing community needs over a ten-year period, with a formal update after five years. The strategic plan details the current state of the City's parks, recreation and open space systems while identifying focus areas based on a comprehensive assessment of the community's vision and their priorities. It includes a full inventory of parks and details on facilities and equipment at each park and identifies issues and provides analysis of the adequacy of parks and open spaces at the citywide and neighborhood scales. Goals and recommendations are also made in regard to parks development.

A number of issues that require additional consideration, beyond the scope and detail of the Comprehensive Plan, are addressed in the Strategic Plan. The following actions are either reflected in the Strategic Plan or are included in addition to its recommendations.

Actions

14.1 Define a park classification system to help plan for the facility needs in different contexts.

14.2 Develop performance standards and recommended size for each type of park space.

14.3 Consider how neighborhoods are served with parks resources, in accordance with the classification system, and address deficits through park acquisition, design, and programming.

14.4 Consider innovative techniques and locations to provide parks.

14.5 Develop a master plan for each park and community center that addresses site design, programming, future needs, and maintenance.

14.6 Set priorities with respect to upgrading specialized facilities to meet current recreation demand and standards.

GOAL 6

Seek partnerships with government agencies and the private sector to serve Rockville's recreation needs.

Rockville is pleased to work with partners at the County level and private sectors to expand the scope and breadth of recreation facilities available to our residents. Our public agency partners include M-NCPPC, MCPS, and Montgomery County government.

Private recreation resources include recreation rooms and equipment available as an amenity to residents of apartment buildings and common areas owned and maintained by home owners associations (HOA). Some residential communities provide club houses or community centers, which sometimes include swimming pools, indoor play areas, fitness centers, and meeting rooms.

In addition, private businesses provide large indoor recreation spaces in Rockville. Three indoor recreation facilities are located on Southlawn Court in the far northeast of the city. The Rockville Ice Arena is available for hockey, recreational, and speed skating; and other indoor spaces with artificial turf host team competition, including youth leagues for indoor soccer, futsal, lacrosse, and cheerleading.

Rockville has two private country clubs. Woodmont Country Club has two 18-hole golf courses and Lakewood County Club has one 18-hole course. These clubs provide recreation and social activities, as well, for their club members within the City of Rockville.

Policy 15

Foster mutually beneficial partnerships with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

Facilities owned by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) contribute to the overall recreation opportunities available in Rockville. MCPS has 16 schools within the city, each offering recreation facilities open to the public when school is out-of-session, including ballfields, tennis courts, gymnasiums, playgrounds, and basketball courts.

Other properties of former schools owned by MCPS are leased for use by private schools, non-profit organizations, and others. The City of Rockville leases and maintains some of these former school properties to allow public access to their athletic fields and amenities. These schools fill important locational gaps in the City parks system. For example, Rockville Department of Recreation and Parks leases Mark Twain School Athletic Park, which is heavily used.

Of concern in these leased facilities is the potential loss of athletic facilities on property owned by MCPS should they be developed for a use other than an athletic park, and conversely, parks on property owned by Rockville that are planned and reserved by agreement with MCPS as future school sites.

Actions

15.1 Work with MCPS to determine the future plans for three reserved school sites in the King Farm and Fallsgrove neighborhoods.

15.2 Work with MCPS to determine the future plans for the former site of the Carl Sandburg Learning Center.

15.3 Strengthen lease agreements with MCPS for athletic field use at MCPS-owned Mark Twain Park.

15.4 Consider acquiring MCPS-owned sites that become available if deemed useful as recreation and park space.

Policy 16

Foster mutually beneficial partnerships with Montgomery County government the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), and Montgomery College for shared use of park, recreation, and cultural facilities.

A number of parks in Montgomery County are located beyond the city's municipal borders, yet are easily accessible to Rockville residents. Rock Creek Regional Park, adjacent to the eastern border of the city, is the largest of these, covering approximately 1,800 acres along its full extent. Also

nearby are Cabin John Regional Park, Falls Road Park, and Watts Branch Stream Valley Park. Montgomery County Parks Department also manages community centers open to Rockville residents.

Recreation and Parks has partnered with Montgomery College over the years, including as a site for Fourth of July fireworks. The College's 400-meter track is a facility used by local track clubs, while the Municipal Swim and Fitness Center is so close to the college campus that students and faculty express an interest in an access arrangement. Continued and expanded sharing of facilities is welcomed by the City.

In addition, the City of Rockville leases and maintains some properties owned by Montgomery County government to allow public access to their athletic fields and amenities. These sites fill important locational gaps in the City parks system. For example, Rockville Department of Recreation and Parks leases athletic fields at Broome Athletic Park and Lone Oak Park, which are heavily used given the lack of a major playfield east of the CSX and Metro railroad tracks.

Of concern in these leased facilities is the potential loss of athletic facilities on property owned by Montgomery County government should they be developed for a use other than an athletic park.



Rockville Recreation and Parks staff manages our Saturday Farmer's Market on the County Circuit courthouse's jury parking lot in the southern part of Town Center.

Actions

16.1 Work with Montgomery County government to determine the future plans for Broome and Lone Oak Parks.

16.2 Strengthen lease agreements with Montgomery County government for athletic field use at County-owned Broome and Lone Oak Parks.

16.3 Consider acquiring sites owned by Montgomery County government that become available if deemed useful as recreation and park space.

16.4 Work with Montgomery County government, M-NCPPC, and MDOT SHA to foster shared use by and enhanced connections for city residents for parks and open space areas located beyond the city's municipal borders. *(See also Action 5.6 of the Transportation Element)*

Policy 17

Effectively utilize the strengths and resources of the private sector to complement the policies of the Recreation and Parks Department.

Actions

17.1 Explore the potential for public-private partnerships to provide athletic facilities, running track, visual and performing arts, and other needs.

17.2 Conduct a study to assess the potential for developing additional specialized sports facilities or a multi-purpose venue.

17.3 Continue to identify new and dedicated funding sources to ensure long-term financial sustainability for the Rockville Recreation and Parks Department.