



Re-Imagining RedGate Park

Master Plan

Adopted by Mayor and Council for the City of Rockville,
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CONTENTS

General Description	6
Illustrative Plan	6
<i>Park Features</i>	12
Pathway Network	12
Visitor Center	13
Playground	14
Picnic Area	15
Dog Park	16
Community Gardens	17
Amphitheater	18
Deck Overlook at Amphitheater	19
Existing Parking Lot	20
Entrance Road	20
Plan Flexibility	21
Habitat Areas Plan	23
<i>Arboretum Features</i>	23
Existing Forest	23
New Forest	23
Feature Landscapes	25
Passive Area/Lawn	25
Conclusion	26
Appendix	27

Executive Summary

RedGate Park is an approximately 130 acre site located in the City of Rockville at the intersection of Norbeck and Avery Roads. Formerly a golf course, the site is currently enjoyed by the community for events and predominantly passive uses.

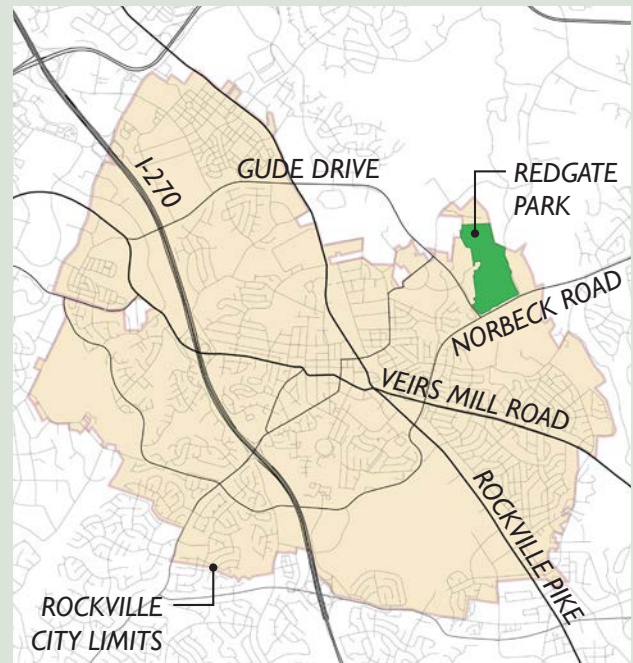
Since early 2021, the City has been leading a planning process for the development of a master plan that could be implemented in phases over time. The master plan process has been informed by public input, analysis of existing park conditions, and guidance by Mayor and Council.

RedGate Park is envisioned to be a predominantly passive park that emphasizes natural habitat and pathway enhancements throughout. Passive areas of the park represent approximately 90% of the total park acreage. In addition to the existing parking lot and entry drive, the central park area will include features and amenities interwoven with the natural habitat areas—including a new visitor center, community gardens, picnic area, playground, dog park and amphitheater with an associated deck overlook.

Over time, the entire park will be developed as an arboretum to feature arboretum plant and tree specimens and collections. Interpretive signage will be integrated into natural environments and park features with access along the pathway network.

Environmental Site Design (ESD)—including an emphasis on native and adaptive vegetation, bioswales, rain gardens, pervious paving, and/or green roofs—will be utilized and integrated into the landscape design of park features.

While some natural areas of the park may not be accessible to visitors with mobility concerns due to the existing steep terrain in certain locations, most park features and all experiences will be accessible to all.



Rockville and RedGate Park Context Map



Master Plan

General Description

RedGate Park is envisioned to be a predominantly passive park that emphasizes natural habitat and pathway enhancements throughout. Passive areas of the park represent approximately 90% of the total park acreage. In addition to the existing parking lot and entry drive, the central park area will include features and amenities interwoven with the natural habitat areas—including a new visitor center, community gardens, picnic area, playground, dog exercise area and amphitheater with an associated deck overlook. While the habitat areas will comprise the majority of the park, the other park features are described first for purposes of this master plan.

Over time, the entire park will be developed as an arboretum to feature arboretum plant and tree specimens and collections. Interpretive signage will be integrated into natural environments and park features with access along the pathway network.

Environmental Site Design (ESD)—including an emphasis on native and adaptive vegetation, bioswales, rain gardens, pervious paving, and/or green roofs—will be utilized and integrated into the landscape design of park features.

Illustrative Plan

The Illustrative Plan, illustrated to the right, highlights the features described on the following pages and supplemented with precedent images that portray the potential character of each feature. This plan is supplemented by the Habitat Areas Plan (on page 22), which follows and identifies park-wide enhancements to the natural environment.



View highlighting pathway access to aquatic habitats around the existing ponds and opportunities for interpretive and educational signage. Understory plantings along forest edges enhance the natural habitat while showcasing different plant collections as part of the arboretum.



Illustrative Plan

PARK FEATURES

- 1 New Visitor Center Area
- 2 Community Gardens
- 3 Amphitheater
- 4 Deck Overlook and Gathering Area
- 5 Playground
- 6 Picnic Lawn
- 7 Passive Area/Lawn
- 8 Existing Pathway
- 9 Connecting Pathways
- 10 Existing Steep Pathways
- 11 Re-aligned Entrance Road
- 12 Pedestrian Entry Gate
- 13 Gate
- 14 Dog Exercise Area
- 15 Existing Parking Lot

Existing Pathways
(Exceeding 5% Slope)

Paved Pathway,
Existing

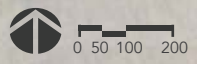
Paved Pathway,
Improved/Added

Existing Pathway,
To Be Removed

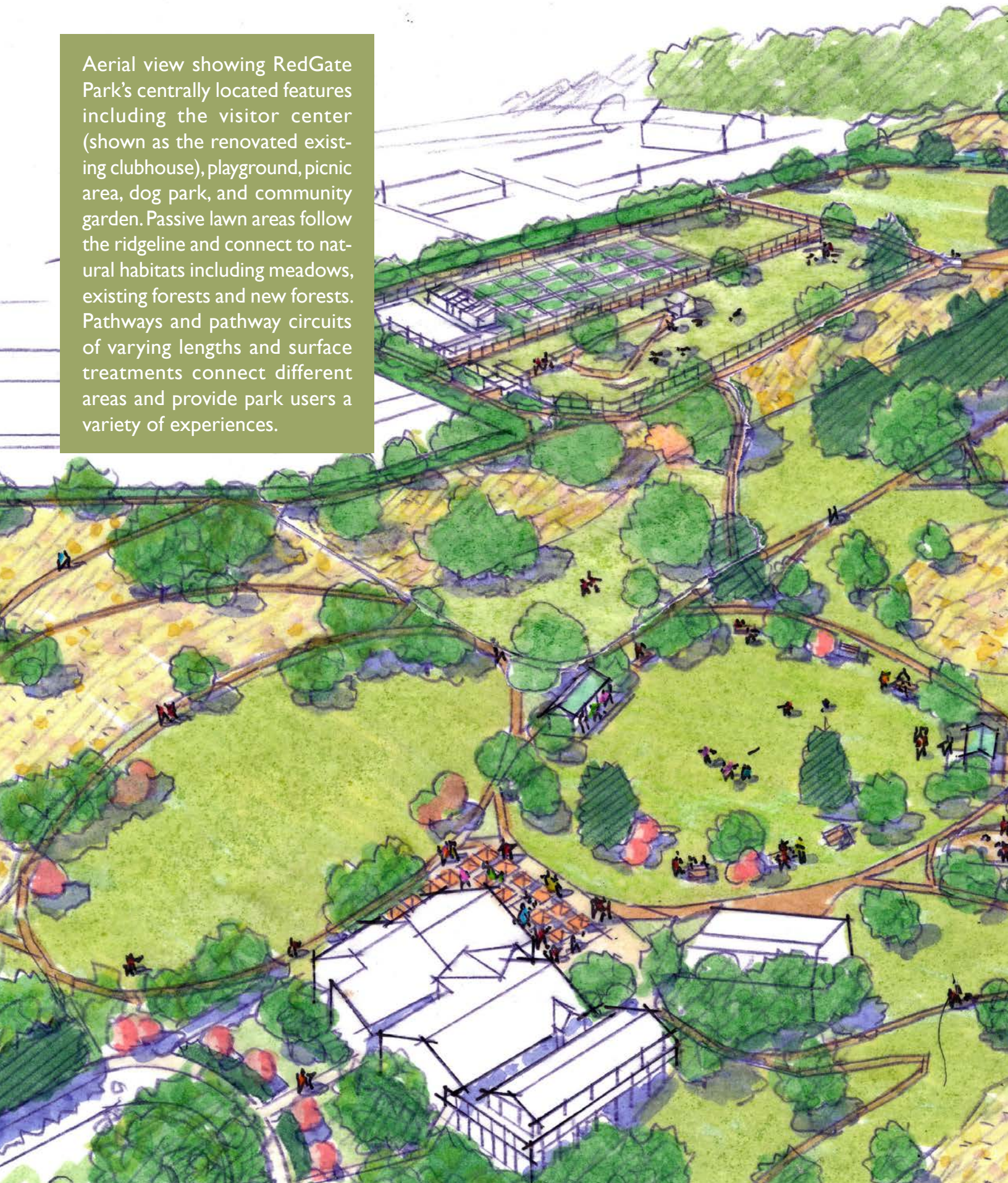
Rock Creek
Regional Park

Blair G. Ewing
School and Mark
Twain Park

Croydon Creek Nature
Center/John G. Hayes
Forest Preserve



Aerial view showing RedGate Park's centrally located features including the visitor center (shown as the renovated existing clubhouse), playground, picnic area, dog park, and community garden. Passive lawn areas follow the ridgeline and connect to natural habitats including meadows, existing forests and new forests. Pathways and pathway circuits of varying lengths and surface treatments connect different areas and provide park users a variety of experiences.







An aerial view of a landscape design sketch for RedGate Park. The sketch shows a network of green spaces, including dense forest areas and open grassy fields. A road, Norbeck Road, runs diagonally across the lower right portion of the image. A parking lot is located near the center-right, adjacent to the road. A pond is visible in the upper left area. The design includes various tree symbols, some colored red and others green, and blue lines indicating drainage paths or riparian buffers. A white rectangular feature, possibly an amphitheater or event space, is located near the parking lot. The overall layout shows how new forests connect existing fragments and expand riparian buffers along drainage ways.

Aerial view showing the southern portion of RedGate Park along Norbeck Road. New forests connect existing forest fragments and expand riparian buffers along existing drainage-ways, and forest edges are enhanced with shrub and understory tree layers. Park features—including an outdoor amphitheater and event space overlooking the existing pond—are near the existing parking lot.

Park Features

Pathway Network

The primary feature of RedGate Park is the trail and pathway network. This network is comprised of both existing and new trails and pathways that create a series of circuits of varying lengths (from less than ½-mile to about 3 miles). These paths provide park users opportunities for walking and hiking, general exercise, enjoyment of nature, and connectivity among park features, and will be marked with mile markers. Some segments of the existing pathway system (originally designed to support golf activities) will be removed while remaining segments are joined by connecting paths to provide logical circulation throughout the park.

Most paths will have a slope less than 5% and be paved with an appropriate surface for accessibility. Some segments of existing paths that are greater than 5% will remain to provide connections between circuits and to provide more challenging experiences for those seeking them. These paths will be marked with signage advising park users of the steeper conditions.

Pathway materials include asphalt, permeable paving, natural surface, boardwalks, and bridges. In addition to the primary pathway network that's marked on the Illustrative Plan, rugged natural trails (not shown) will provide access to woodland areas and will develop over time to accommodate park programming and usage. The entire pathway network will allow for programming of cross country athletic events and nature walks of varying course lengths, and for the flexibility to establish different routes as needed.

While the pathway network within RedGate Park is extensive, connections between RedGate Park, the surrounding community, and regional assets also need to be considered as the master plan is implemented. In addition to the new pathway along the realigned entrance road (described on page 20), pedestrian connections will be provided to



the parking lot at 6 Taft Court to meet the local sidewalk network. Future consideration should be given to additional pedestrian connections to adjacent properties within RedGate Industrial Park (in cooperation with private property owners); a pathway connection to Rock Creek Regional Park (as feasible with the steep terrain); and to the Rockville Civic Center Park with a well-marked and signalized pedestrian crossing at Norbeck Road or underpass, if feasible.



Visitor Center

Visitor Center Building

A visitor center is proposed for RedGate Park, centrally located in the general vicinity of the existing clubhouse building (to be demolished¹). A new visitor center will provide a universally-accessible building, similar in scale to the existing clubhouse. The new building, however, will be simpler in both layout and roof shape, supporting more functional, flexible, multi-purpose spaces for a variety of activities and events.

The new visitor center will include restrooms located for efficiency, accessible from both inside and outside the building. The visitor center may accommodate standalone events and/or serve as a hub for park-related activities, such as nature-walks and environmental programs which utilize both indoor and associated outdoor spaces.

As an alternative to a new visitor center building, the existing clubhouse building may be renovated to become compliant with current building codes and to better function as a visitor center; however, the cost of such a renovation would exceed the cost

of demolishing the existing clubhouse building and constructing a new visitor center, as described above.

Visitor Center Site

The visitor center site describes the area associated with the visitor center building and includes outdoor gathering spaces next to the building along with the pathways connecting the center to the parking lot. Visitor center site improvements will integrate the visitor center building and its programming into the park landscape, with outdoor gathering spaces that can either support independent programming or programming that is occurring within the visitor center.

Visitor center site amenities will include paved and lawn gathering areas, accessible sidewalks and ramps (connecting parking to the building), seating in the form of benches and movable tables with chairs, bike racks, trees and ornamental plantings, public artwork, and ESD facilities integrated into the landscape design as a landscape feature. Electric and water access will also be included to facilitate outdoor programming and everyday use of the spaces adjacent to the visitor center. Other site utilities include storm drain, sanitary sewer, water, and electric connections.

¹ For the purposes of the graphics included throughout this master plan, the visitor center is shown in the location of the current clubhouse. The actual location of the visitor center, however, could be elsewhere within the zone identified on the Illustrative Plan (on page 7). The final location will be determined when the visitor center becomes a project.

Playground

A playground is proposed to the northeast of the existing clubhouse building, adjacent to the visitor center area and atop an existing knoll featuring park views in all directions. In this location, the playground can be easily served by the restroom facilities and amenities provided by the nearby visitor center. The playground will provide opportunities for nature-based play in a comfortable and accessible environment which is complementary to the overall natural qualities of the park.

The knoll will be graded to create interesting and interactive landforms as part of the playground. Paved pathways of varying textures will provide tactile experiences and accessibility to different playground areas. Other playground amenities include a rubberized safety surface; a variety of nature-based play equipment that serves children of all abilities; shade sails and new tree plantings to provide shade; site furnishings, such as seating and trash/recycle receptacles; and public artwork. ESD facilities will be integrated into the landscape design as a landscape and educational feature.





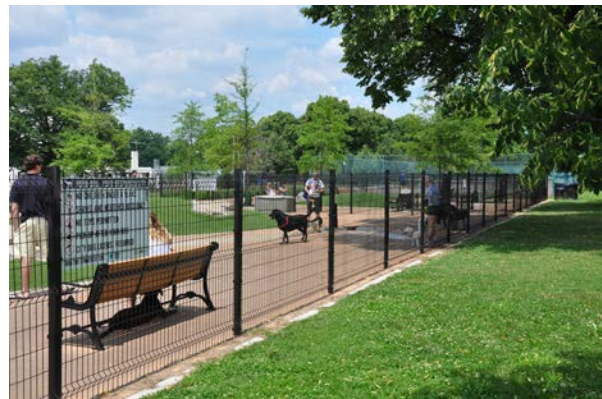
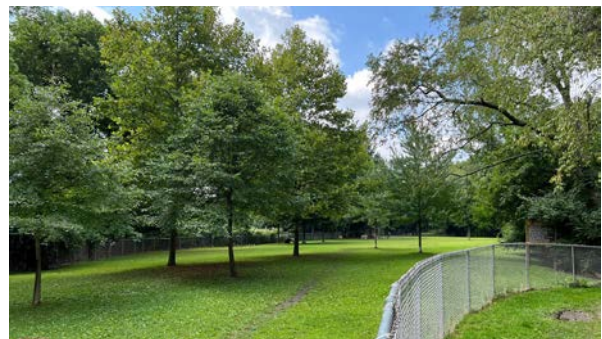
Picnic Area

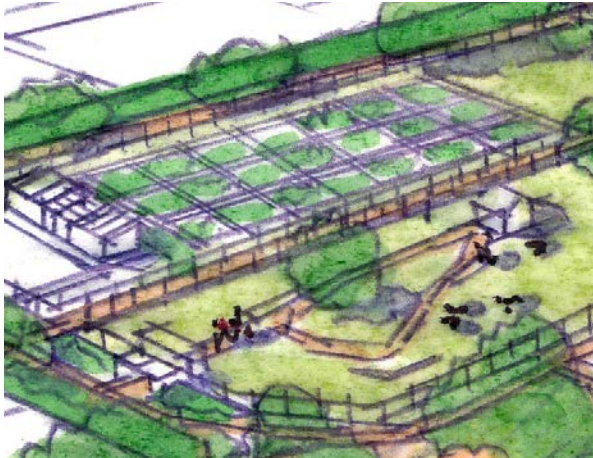
Adjacent to the playground and visitor center, a picnic area is proposed to include picnic pavilions and individual picnic tables around the perimeter of a central lawn area. The picnic area will provide opportunities for park users to have small gatherings near the playground and visitor center amenities. This proximity allows for picnics and gatherings in conjunction with visitor center or playground programming in addition to standalone picnicking. Amenities include two small-to-medium sized covered pavilions; individual picnic tables (including handicapped-accessible tables) on concrete pads; covered individual picnic tables; water and electric hookups; and bioretention areas. New tree planting will supplement existing trees and help integrate picnic amenities into the overall park landscape.

Dog Exercise Area

A dog exercise area—including separate fenced exercise areas for small and large dogs—will be provided to the north of 6 Taft Court, in close proximity to the parking resources there. This location allows park users opportunities to have their dogs exercise off-leash within a contained area.

Dog exercise area amenities may include fencing; gated entry areas; paved concrete accessible pathways near the entrances; a small pavilion, accessible from both the large and small dog exercise areas; benches; signage; and water and electric hookups.





Community Gardens

Community gardens are located to the north of 6 Taft Court, adjacent to the dog exercise area and the parking resources associated with 6 Taft Court. The gardens will provide opportunities for Rockville residents to lease a plot for the growing of flowers and vegetables in a community-oriented setting.

A paved drive and service area may extend from the 6 Taft Court parking area to provide access to a storage shed, compost bin, and mulch bin. Other support services provided within the fenced area include water and electrical hookups, ESD facilities, and a storm drain. Crushed stone or mulch pathways will provide access to the individual garden plots, and raised accessible planting beds will be provided near the paved service drive. Picnic tables will be provided within the fenced area to accommodate social interaction and small garden-related gatherings and workshops.

Amphitheater

An amphitheater is proposed to the west of the existing parking lot, adjacent to the largest existing pond and to the southeast of 6 Taft Court, where additional parking will be available for amphitheater activities. New pathway access, as part of the pathway network described earlier, will be provided along with low impact lighting to illuminate pathways leading to parking areas. The amphitheater will accommodate daytime and early evening performances and events.

The amphitheater will be graded slightly to accentuate the natural landform and include an area of fixed seating, including accessible seating, and a larger area of lawn seating where audience members can set up blankets or folding chairs. The performance area includes a covered stage that can also serve as a pavilion for events.

An access drive and service area will be provided near the stage to accommodate loading and unloading, food trucks and/or vendor tents, and accessible parking. This service area will only be open to vehicles during events, with a control gate located where the access drive connects to the park entry road. When not in-use to support performances, this service area can serve as a gathering area during other park events.



The amphitheater area will be planted with new canopy trees to frame views and provide shade along the perimeter of the viewing lawn. Other support services include electric and water hookups, and ESD facilities incorporated into the overall landscape design.

Deck Overlook at Amphitheater

A low deck overlook is proposed as part of the amphitheater area, wrapping behind the stage and extending along the pond shoreline. The overlook will provide opportunities to engage in the water-front habitats and provide gathering space during performances and events. Park users will be protected by a railing along the edge of the deck and interpretive signage will be provided at key locations.



Existing Parking Lot

The existing parking lot will continue to serve the park and will be improved, but not expanded. By maintaining the existing footprint, the overall impervious surface coverage within the park can be minimized. During evenings and weekends, additional parking spaces will be available at the City-owned 6 Taft Court and/or Mark Twain Park.

Improvements to the parking lot include resurfacing and replacement of some areas of pavement in poor condition, new curb and gutter, pavement markings, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant concrete parking spaces and signage, tree pruning and removal of damaged trees, new tree planting, and new pedestrian-scaled ornamental lighting.

Entrance Road

The park will continue to be served by the existing entrance extending off Avery Road; however, the entrance road is proposed to be improved to accommodate increased park usage, amenities, and events. Improvements include repaving and realignment of the entrance road at the intersection with Avery Road to create a safer 90-degree intersection. As part of this realignment, a new pathway will be incorporated along the entrance road, connecting to the sidewalk along Avery Road. A manual swing gate will be provided to restrict vehicles from entering the park when closed. A new entrance monument sign is proposed and ESD facilities will be incorporated into the landscape design. While detailed traffic studies have not been conducted, the plan provides for an exit turn lane and a signalized intersection, should that be required in the future.



Plan Flexibility

The Illustrative Plan on page 7 highlights how different park features can be sensitively integrated on the site to comprise RedGate Park. As a master plan, this concept provides an overall framework allowing refinements as projects are designed and implemented.

As described above, the plan anticipates a new visitor center building in place of the existing clubhouse. If a visitor center is constructed in a nearby location other than that of the existing clubhouse, new opportunities would present themselves. For example, in the site design of a different visitor center location, the entire hilltop area should be considered along with the placement of the playground and picnic area as they relate to the visitor center (all still within the general region where they're currently depicted on the Illustrative Plan).

Additionally, there may also be an opportunity to locate an amphitheater in the area to the north of the playground to take advantage of the natural landform and eastward orientation. With the existing clubhouse (or a visitor center built in the same location) this area is not accessible to service vehicles or ADA-compliant parking, both necessary to support amphitheater events. A visitor center constructed in a different location nearby, however, could create opportunities to extend a service drive from the existing parking lot to an amphitheater in this location.

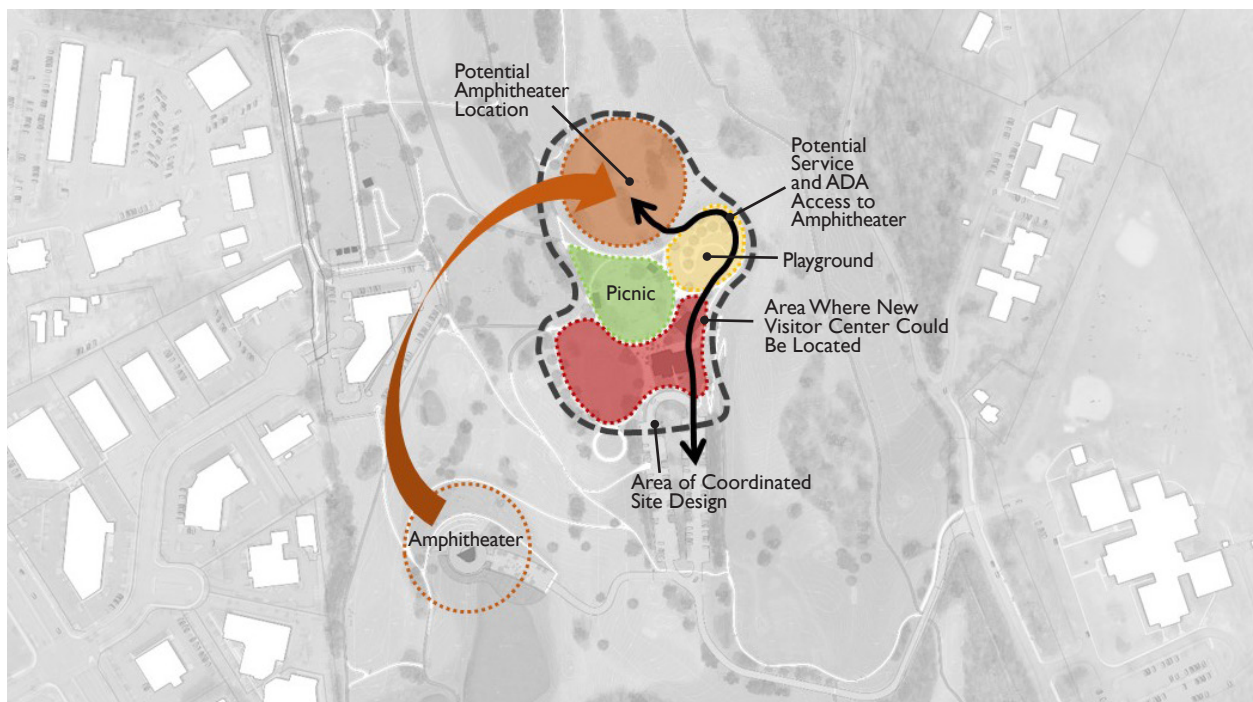
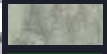
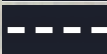
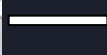


Diagram showing potential for Amphitheater, and associated service/ADA access, to be located near the visitor center if a new visitor center is constructed in a different location from the existing clubhouse building. With this scenario, the site design for all park features in this area-the visitor center, amphitheater, playground, and picnic area-should be coordinated and designed holistically.



Habitat Areas Plan

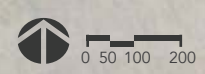
ARBORETUM FEATURES

-  Existing Forest
-  New Forest
-  Feature Landscapes
-  Passive Area/Lawn
-  Existing Pathways (Exceeding 5% Slope)
-  Paved Pathway, Existing
-  Paved Pathway, Improved/Added
-  Existing Pathway, To Be Removed

Rock Creek Regional Park

Blair G. Ewing School and Mark Twain Park

Croydon Creek Nature Center/John G. Hayes Forest Preserve



Habitat Areas Plan

As described above, the entire RedGate Park is envisioned to be an arboretum—implemented incrementally—with a majority of the park reserved for passive recreation and natural habitats. Arboretum elements, including tree identification labels, will be integrated into the landscapes of the park features (starting on page 12). Most of the arboretum will be comprised of the natural habitat areas located throughout RedGate Park. As an overlay to the Illustrative Plan (see page 7), the Habitat Areas Plan on page 22 illustrates the primary arboretum features described in this section. These features include existing natural habitat areas (forests and meadows currently present in RedGate Park) and enhanced habitat areas (new forests and feature landscapes, or non-forest habitats, including meadows and limited-mow areas). The arboretum can utilize labeled native and naturalized plant collections to highlight these habitats and also aquatic habitats along RedGate’s streams and pond edges. With all arboretum features, there is an emphasis on protecting and improving bird habitat.

With this habitat areas overlay, the park master plan creates opportunities for a variety of nature-based programming. The pathway network, described on page 12, will provide accessibility to most of the habitat areas and arboretum features. Where habitats and arboretum features are not accessible to those facing mobility challenges, duplicative landscapes and/or interpretive signage will be provided within nearby accessible areas in order to provide an enjoyable and equally informative experience.

Arboretum Features

Existing Forest

Forest stands exist throughout RedGate Park, providing forest habitats comprised primarily of trees with some layering and undergrowth. These forests will be protected and enhanced. Enhancements will include continued removal of invasive species,

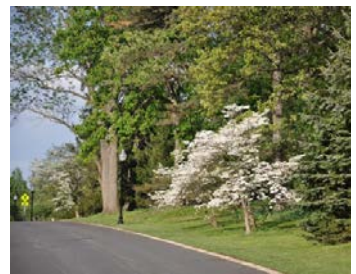
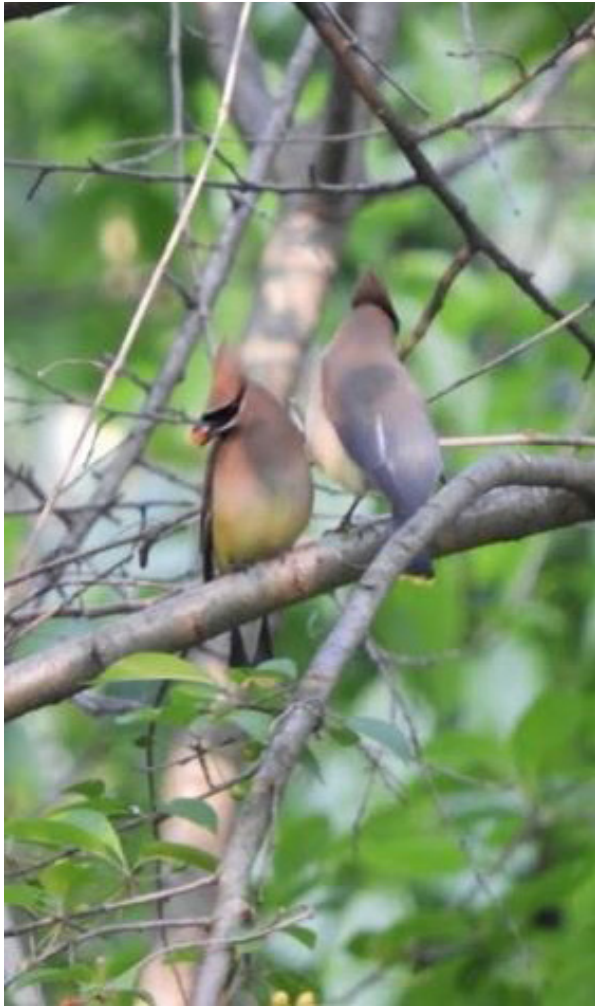
replaced with native species. Access to forest areas will be provided by paved trails (both under and over 5% in grade), along with rugged nature trails as part of the overall pathway network. Some forest areas—including new understory plantings along forest edges—will be highlighted as parts of the arboretum experience. Additional enhancements include connecting existing forest fragments with new forest, as described below.

New Forest

Approximately 29 acres of new forest is illustrated on the Habitat Areas Plan, primarily along the southern, eastern, and northern perimeters of the park where it can most effectively connect existing (but fragmented) forest stands, fill gaps in the forest habitat, and increase riparian buffers along the drainage systems. New forest will also help connect the forest habitats of RedGate Park with forested areas associated with the adjacent Rock Creek Regional Park to the west and with Croydon Creek Nature Center/John G. Hayes Forest Preserve to the south. As with the existing forest, park users will have access to new forest areas through existing and new pathways. New forests will play an integral role in the development of the arboretum. Creating new forests can provide opportunities to establish different forest communities. Additionally, new forests can introduce interpretation and educational experiences for park visitors, which may focus on



Example of educational park signs





the importance of forests as a source of shelter and food for birds, how forests evolve over time, and/or the requirements for establishing new forests (e.g., the importance of invasive plant management, use of native plants and species diversity, and protection against deer damage).

Feature Landscapes

In addition to forest habitats, RedGate Park will include non-forest habitats—or, “feature landscapes”. Feature landscapes include forest edges augmented with new understory trees, shrubs, and scrub, in addition to existing and new meadow areas, which provide a combination of vegetation types. Feature landscapes may also include pollinator gardens, sensory gardens, and riparian gardens, which can either be established as standalone features or integrated into the landscape design of other park features (for example, as part of the outdoor areas adjacent to the visitor center, near the playground, or within the community gardens, etc.). As some of these feature landscapes are established, continued control of invasive plant species by professionals and volunteers will be necessary.

Passive Area/Lawn

In addition to forests and feature landscapes, RedGate Park also includes a connected network of open lawn areas that link the many different park features. Lawns are primarily located along the ridgeline, running through the center of the park. These lawn areas would be mowed regularly and allow for passive and unstructured play, gathering, and the showcasing of specimen trees that can be planted over time as part of the arboretum collection. Pathways create a series of circuits around the perimeters of the lawn areas, allowing access to both passive use areas and feature landscapes as they interface with the lawns.

Conclusion

The park and arboretum features described above comprise the anticipated future amenities for RedGate Park. It is important to note that these features will be implemented in phases—particularly extensive park-wide enhancements such as new forest, feature landscapes, collections associated with the arboretum, and improvements to the pathway network. Additionally, many opportunities exist for funding and implementation of improvements through a variety of sources. Public art will be coordinated with and implemented and funded by the City's Art in Public Places Program. New forested areas can be established and funded through off-site afforestation required of private development projects unable to meet requirements on-site. Opportunities exist to fund park implementation through outside sources, such as grants, foundations, sponsorships, partnerships, etc. And, in partnership with the City, some improvements—such as tree plantings, invasive removal projects, interpretive signage, and other projects—may be implemented through volunteer efforts.