BALTIMORE COUNTY

LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

2022

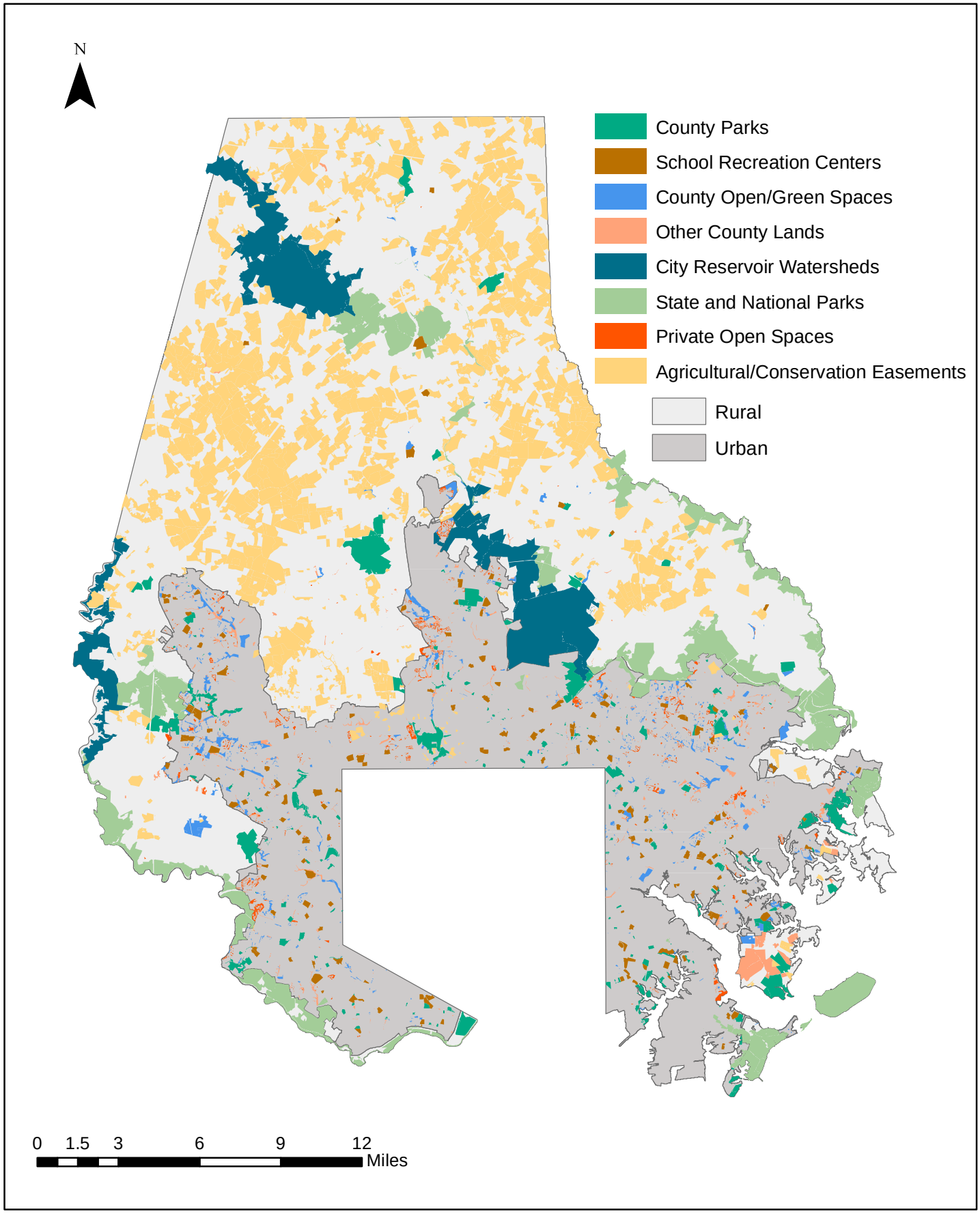


BALTIMORE COUNTY
RECREATION
& PARKS

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Preserved Land in Baltimore County











Executive Summary

Parks play an important role creating a high quality of life for Baltimore County residents by providing areas for recreation and relaxation, maintaining a healthy natural environment, and making spaces available for cultural and social activities. In the past few years, the Department of Recreation and Parks has seen increasing park visitation, with more people opting for outdoor exercise and gatherings. The Department of Recreation and Parks has initiated numerous new and exciting projects, including parkland acquisitions, new park development, and park renovations and enhancements, in an effort to provide expanded and equitable recreational opportunities.

The previous Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) was adopted in 2017 and has served as a guide for the Department of Recreation and Parks for the last five years. The new plan that follows provides an update on the status of parks and recreation in Baltimore County, documents progress made toward the goals set in 2017, assesses current parks and recreation infrastructure and community needs, and presents recommendations to better serve Baltimore County residents.

Chapter One, Introduction, gives an overview of the plan, its legislative context, and the County's geography and demographics. This plan is submitted to the State of Maryland to maintain eligibility for Program Open Space, which provides grants for land acquisition and park development. With some areas of Baltimore County projected to see 4-6% growth in population from 2025-2035, it is vital that greenspaces be updated and expanded to serve more densely populated communities.

Chapter Two, Recreation and Parks Inventory, is a comprehensive account of County, State, and National parks, school recreation centers, special facilities, and other open/greenspaces. Together, these represent 88.3 square miles, or 15% of Baltimore County.

Chapter Three, Measuring User Demand, presents the results of staff interviews, public meetings, and an online survey. The survey revealed a high desire for bicycle lanes, nature trails, and paved paths, and undeveloped greenspaces, all amenities for non-organized recreation. Pickleball, which has recently risen in popularity, was also requested at a high rate. Responses on the current state of parks and recreation services varied across the County, with areas west of Baltimore City generally registering the lowest ratings. While the online survey was intended to reach all County residents, the survey responses were not evenly distributed across the County's geography and did not reflect the racial diversity of the County. These shortcomings highlight a need to reach out in a more targeted manner to those whose voices have not yet been heard.

Chapter Four, Level of Service, evaluates the geographical distribution of amenities, to determine which areas are being underserved relative to the County average. While the results vary depending on the amenity, the West Central and West regions of the county frequently emerge as having less access than the county average. These regions were also among those identified as having low park equity, along with the West Southwest, and parts of the Northwest. These regions should be high priorities for park acquisition and development.

Chapter Five, Goals and Objectives, documents the progress made toward goals set in 2017. Over five years, fifteen sites were acquired to serve as parks or green spaces, including a 225-acre addition to an existing park, and several smaller acquisitions in urban areas. This chapter also summarizes the results of previous sections, for each of the regions of the County defined in Chapter One, detailing both general priorities and specific projects identified in the outreach process. These will help to guide future capital improvements.

Chapter Six, Implementing Programs, lists the funding resources typically used for Recreation and Parks projects and their purposes. Program Open Space provided an average of $6.75 million annually from Fiscal Year 2019- 2022. Other sources of funding include other State aid, County general funds, bonds, and debt premiums, local open space waiver fees, and occasional other unique sources.

Chapter Seven, Capital Improvement Plan, includes a list of projects that the Department of Recreation and Parks hopes to carry out in the coming years, both providing details on specific projects and cataloging general priorities based on the analysis of the LPPRP and other known needs.

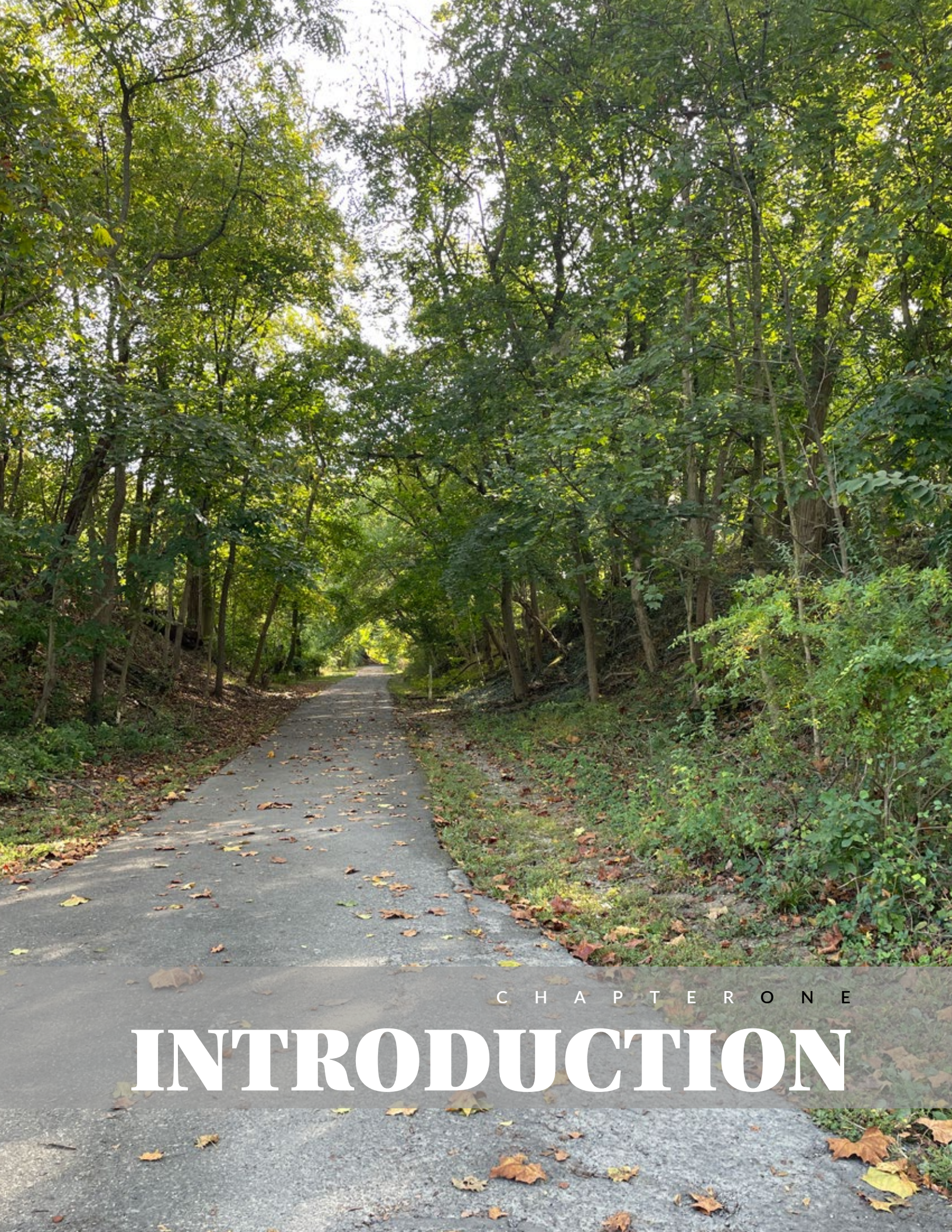
Chapter Eight, Natural Resource Land Conservation, is an overview of the important natural resources that Baltimore County aims to protect, including forested lands, plant and animal habitats, streams and waterways, and Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas. Our parks play an important role in maintaining and improving all of these natural resources.

Chapter Nine, Agricultural Land Preservation, inventories the land that is held in agricultural and conservation easements, totaling 103.4 square miles or 17% of the County's land. Baltimore County is certified by the Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation through June 30, 2023, in recognition of the County's policies that maintain an agricultural industry and culture.

This plan documents the significant recreational assets of Baltimore County while outlining areas for improvements. As in 2017, the analysis identified a need for land acquisitions in the densely populated parts of western Baltimore County and other urban regions. Through the survey, written comments, and oral testimony at the public meeting, residents asked for additional walking and biking paths and better connectivity. Also through the survey and comments about specific facilities, residents expressed a need for maintenance at existing sites. New in 2022, there was a strong push for additional pickleball facilities and, to a lesser extent, disc golf courses.

In the next five years, the Department of Recreation and Parks aims to respond to the needs expressed, building on an already strong network of greenspaces, community centers, and athletic facilities, to better and more equitably serve a growing and changing Baltimore County.





CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Plan Overview

The Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) serves as a planning document that outlines Baltimore County's efforts in three general realms of land conservation—parks and recreation, natural resource conservation, and agricultural land preservation. The County has long been recognized as a national leader in land conservation, with its strong multi-tier approach of growth management, agricultural preservation, environmental policy, and park acquisition and development. The LPPRP serves as a planning document for the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP), particularly for capital projects including park acquisition, development, and rehabilitation.

This plan provides a summary of the County's land preservation and conservation vision, outlining what is in place as well as what gaps remain. Resident input on both the current status of parks and recreation and future needs is incorporated into the LPPRP. The following text presents goals and implementation strategies that will guide the County in serving the needs of residents and visitors and protecting the environmental well-being of the local lands, waters, flora, and fauna.

It is important to bear in mind that the LPPRP serves as an advisory plan, and that the recommendations contained herein do not represent tangible fiscal commitments. The availability of capital funding resources, in particular, have a great bearing on the County's ability to purchase land, construct and improve parks, and undertake capital rehabilitation and enhancement projects ranging from park renovations, to stream restoration, to shoreline erosion control measures. This plan instead serves as a general guide, and more comprehensive fiscal planning remains an ongoing process that eventually comes to fruition during the County's capital budgeting process.

1.2 - Legislative Background

Maryland Program Open Space (POS) Law, as presented within Title 5, Subtitle 9 of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, requires each county to prepare an LPPRP every five years to maintain eligibility for funding through POS.

> **PROGRAM OPEN SPACE (POS) is the State of Maryland's preeminent funding program for parklands and recreational facilities. POS was established in 1969 through the enactment of a dedicated tax, the statewide real estate transfer tax (a 0.5% tax on most property transfer transactions). Revenues from the tax are utilized for state, local and municipal parks and recreation capital projects ranging from the acquisition of park sites, to construction of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, to capital renovations of existing parks and facilities.**

Baltimore County has been allocated nearly $130 million since the inception of local POS funding in 1970, an average of about $3.25 million per year. The County's three largest annual allocations were received in fiscal years 2006 – 2008, when its net apportionments averaged approximately $9.7 million per year. Because POS funding is based upon the amount of incoming real estate transfer tax revenues, the amount of funding is variable and fluctuates with economic conditions. Transfer tax revenues have grown steadily over the last five years. Whereas Baltimore County's apportionment (as established by a State formula) was less than $3 million in each of Fiscal Years 2015 – 2017, the average annual allocation increased to more than $6.75 million in the four-year period including Fiscal Years 2019 through 2022.

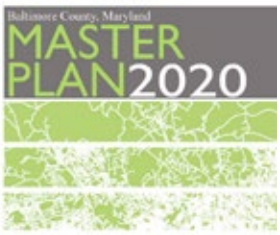
The prior Baltimore County LPPRP was adopted by the Baltimore County Council on May 25, 2017. That plan served primarily as an update to the 2012 County LPPRP, repeating certain content from that plan and providing information on the progress that has been achieved towards its capital project priorities. Likewise, this plan provides an updates on the progress toward the objectives set in the 2017 plan.

1.3 Broader Planning Context



It is important to understand the role of the LPPRP within Baltimore County's overall planning process. The LPPRP is just one of many planning tools and documents that help guide the County in its efforts to provide the residents of the County every opportunity to have a high quality of life, while maintaining a delicate balance between preservation and development. Other notable planning tools are the Baltimore County Master Plan (including its water resource element), the dozens of adopted community plans from throughout the County, initiative-based planning documents such as the County's bicycle and pedestrian access plans, the County's development and growth management policies and regulations, and numerous environment-focused plans. All of these plans, including the LPPRP, support state and federal plans and initiatives, including the State of Maryland's Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.

This LPPRP remains closely tied to the most recent Baltimore County comprehensive plan, Master Plan 2020 (MP2020). Throughout this document there are excerpts and references to MP2020, whose plan vision carries over to this LPPRP:



> **Create and maintain safe and sustainable communities, to achieve a sensible balance of economy, equity, and environment for people to reside, work, pursue careers, raise families, and enjoy the amenities in Baltimore County, Maryland.**

The planning process for the Master Plan 2030 (MP2030) is concurrent with the 2022 LPPRP. While the final MP2030 document is not complete, resident feedback collected as part of the MP2030 process is incorporated in the assessment and recommendations below.



The LPPRP serves as an advisory plan and that the recommendations contained herein do not represent fiscal commitments. This plan serves as a general guide, and more comprehensive fiscal planning remains an ongoing process. Residents and interested parties are encouraged to offer their input through the public input opportunities provided in conjunction with the capital budget – capital improvement program (CIP) processes.

1.4 Geographic Characteristics

Baltimore County comprises approximately 608 square miles of land and inland waters such as the reservoirs, lakes, and non-coastal rivers and streams. The County boasts very diverse landscapes, including scenic Chesapeake Bay shorelines and vistas, dense and bustling urban areas, substantial forested tracts, a vast network of streams and rivers, large and tranquil water reservoirs, and tens of thousands of acres of rolling hills, pastures, and farmlands.

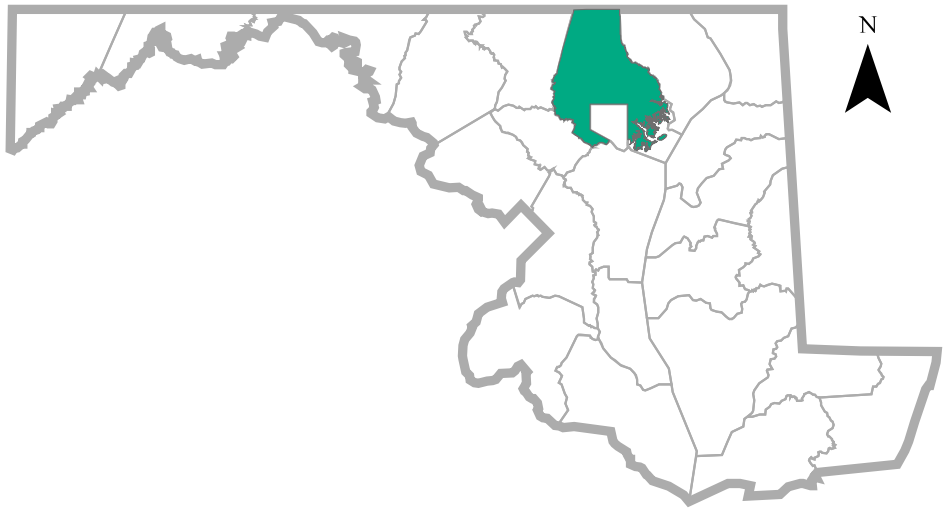


Figure 1. Location of Baltimore County within Maryland

Approximately 80% of the County's land is situated within the physiographic province called the Piedmont Plateau, which is characterized by rolling terrain, low ridges and distinct stream valleys. The remaining 20% of the County is located within the relatively flat to gently sloping Coastal Plain province. The physical character of these provinces greatly shape the County. A number of geographic features, growth management policies, and environmental programs likewise help to define and maintain the County's overall character.

Baltimore County is in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The rivers, streams, and wetlands are an invaluable natural resource. A defining geographic feature of Baltimore County is the approximately 232 miles of shoreline. These coastal waters provide a wide range of recreational opportunities including swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing, and recreational boating.



Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas

Lands adjacent to the Bay and its tidal tributaries are largely protected through the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Program shown in a map on the following page. Enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 1984, this program established a 1000-foot area along the tidal influence of the Chesapeake Bay as a critical area in which development would generally be limited for the purpose of protecting the Bay. Categories of lands within the critical areas were created and defined-- intensely developed areas (IDA), limited development areas (LDA), and resource conservation areas (RCA). Land use and management criteria were formulated for each of the three classifications, and act as a key tool to manage and limit development within the 1000-foot area.

Greenways

Greenways, shown in a map on the following page, are networks of open space and parklands, typically linear in form, which are utilized for preservation, recreation or both. Most greenways in Baltimore County are associated with stream valleys. Some greenways include trails, including: the Cooper Branch, along which runs the Number Nine Trolley Line Trail; Red Run, along which the County's newest greenway trails were developed to serve the Owings Mills Growth Area; and Little Falls and Beetree Run, the streams along which the State's Torrey C. Brown (formerly North-Central) Rail Trail is situated. Greenways also serve as valuable wildlife corridors.



Greenways and Critical Areas



Figure 2. Greenways and Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas

1.5 Recreation and Parks Planning Geography

Recreation and Parks Councils and Regions

Baltimore County's Recreation and Parks Councils are resident-based, non-profit volunteer groups that are responsible for the majority of organized recreation programs that take place at County recreational facilities. As of December of 2021, there are 37 traditional recreation councils. DRP relies upon council volunteers to provide the recreation programs that serve the public, to raise funds to support those programs, and to provide input regarding local recreational facilities' needs. There are also seven councils dedicated to special facilities, such as Baltimore County's nature centers.



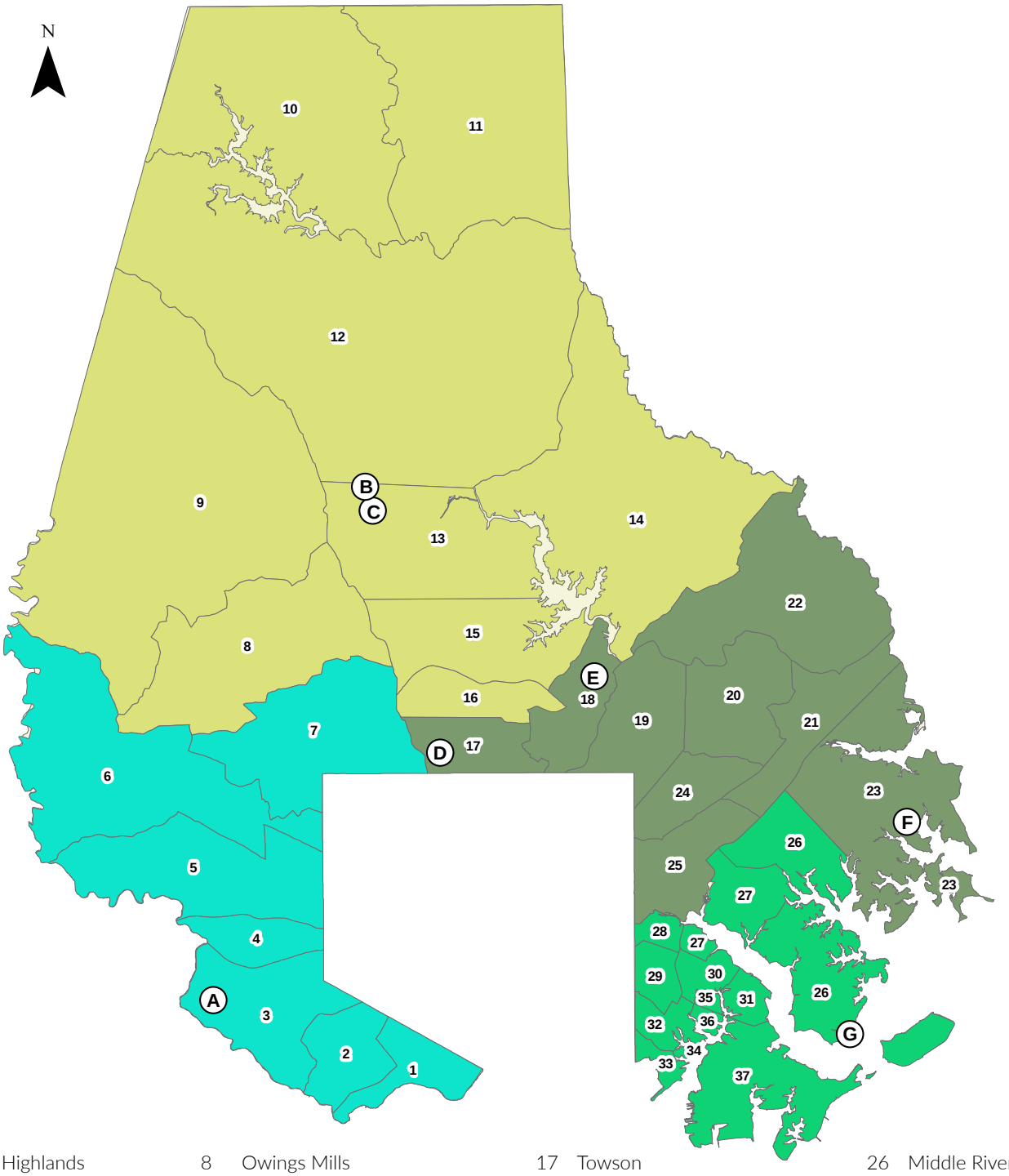
The recreation councils are currently grouped into four recreation and parks regions for the oversight of recreation services. Each of these regions is administered by a Regional Coordinator who oversees Community Recreation Supervisors assigned to the communities and recreation and parks councils of the region. Staff in each of the regions work closely with local recreation and parks councils, who provide the majority of formal, organized recreational programming to the residents of the County. It should be noted that not all parks or recreational facilities are managed as part of a region, and that regional and countywide parks and associated staff are managed in a different manner not directly associated with the regions.



The Department of Recreation and Parks' administrative geography enables the organized activities of the volunteer recreation and parks councils. Recreation Services field staff and their counterparts in the Agriculture, Nature, and Special Facilities Section are stationed throughout the County, each working in a community or special facility office that works with one or more council(s) and administers the parks and recreation physical resources within the bounds of their assigned council(s) or park. These offices and the associated councils operate cooperatively to try to meet the diverse recreational needs of the residents.



Recreation Councils and Regions



1 Baltimore Highlands
2 Arbutus
3 Catonsville
4 Edmondson-Westview
5 Woodlawn
6 Liberty Road
7 Greater Pikesville
8 Owings Mills
9 Reisterstown
10 Prettyboy
11 Seventh District
12 Hereford Zone
13 Cockeysville
14 Carroll Manor
15 Lutherville-Timonium
16 Towsontowne
17 Towson
18 Greater Loch Raven
19 Parkville
20 Perry Hall
21 White Marsh
22 Kingsville
23 Bengies-Chase
24 Overlea-Fullerton
25 Rosedale
26 Middle River
27 Essex-Stembridge
28 Colgate
29 Berkshire-Eastwood
30 Gray Charles
31 North Point Village
32 Dundalk-Eastfield
33 Turner Station
34 Watersedge
35 Bear Creek
36 West Inverness
37 Edgemere-Sparrows Point

Special Facilities

A - Banneker Historical Park
B - Farm Park and Ag Center
C - Oregon Ridge Park
D - Lake Roland Park
E - Cromwell Valley Park
F - Marshy Point Park
G - Rocky Point Park

Regional Planning District Groups

Beginning with the 2017 LPPRP, the DRP has used Regional Planning District Groups to analyze recreation and parks assets and needs. While councils and regions are reorganized through merging or other changes in geographical boundaries, these groupings remain stable, enabling comparisons between years to understand if progress is being made toward the DRP's objectives. Regional Planning Districts are defined by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) as follows:

> Regional Planning Districts are a somewhat larger district level of geographic detail used in transportation planning to summarize demographic characteristics and travel data for an identifiable area. RPDs follow census geography boundaries and contain one or more census tracts ... RPD boundaries have been kept essentially the same since they were developed in the early 1970's. This allows comparison of data over time for a stable geographic unit.

Within this plan RPDs have been grouped into twelve geographically designated RPD Groups. The following table identifies the groups and associated RPDs, and Recreation Councils. In some cases a recreation council may be listed within multiple RPD Groups, reflecting the fact that substantial portions of the recreation council are situated within the bounds of multiple RPD Groups.

It should be noted that the recreation councils remain the functional entities through which organized recreation programs are provided for County residents. The number of traditional recreation councils dropped by three between the 2012 and 2017 LPPRPs and by one between the 2017 and 2022 LPPRPs, making them a poor unit of comparison. In addition, the recreation region boundaries have changed multiple times, with the most recent reorganization occurring in January 2022. To enable stable comparisons, the RPD groups will be used throughout this LPPRP.

Table 1. Regional planning district groups' associated RPDs and rec councils

RPD GROUP	INCLUDED RPDS	ASSOCIATED RECREATION COUNCILS
Central	314,315	Greater Loch Raven, Towson, Towsontowne
East	322,327,328	Bengies-Chase, Essex, Middle River
East Central	316,320,321,326	Overlea-Fullerton, Parkville, Rosedale
North	301,302,304,305	Carroll Manor, Hereford Zone, Prettyboy, Seventh District North Central
North Central	308,309	Cockeysville, Lutherville-Timonium
Northeast	310,317,318	Carroll Manor, Kingsville, Perry Hall, White Marsh Northwest
Northwest	303,306	Owings Mills, Reisterstown
Southeast	329,330,331	Bear Creek, Berkshire-Eastwood, Colgate, Dundalk-Eastfield, Edgemere-Sparrows Point, Gray Charles, North Point Village, Turner Station, Watersedge, West Inverness
Southwest	324,325	Arbutus, Baltimore Highlands, Catonsville West
West	311,312	Liberty Road, Woodlawn
West Central	307,313	Owings Mills, Greater Pikesville
West Southwest	319,323	Edmondson-Westview, Liberty Road, Woodlawn

Regional Planning District Groupings

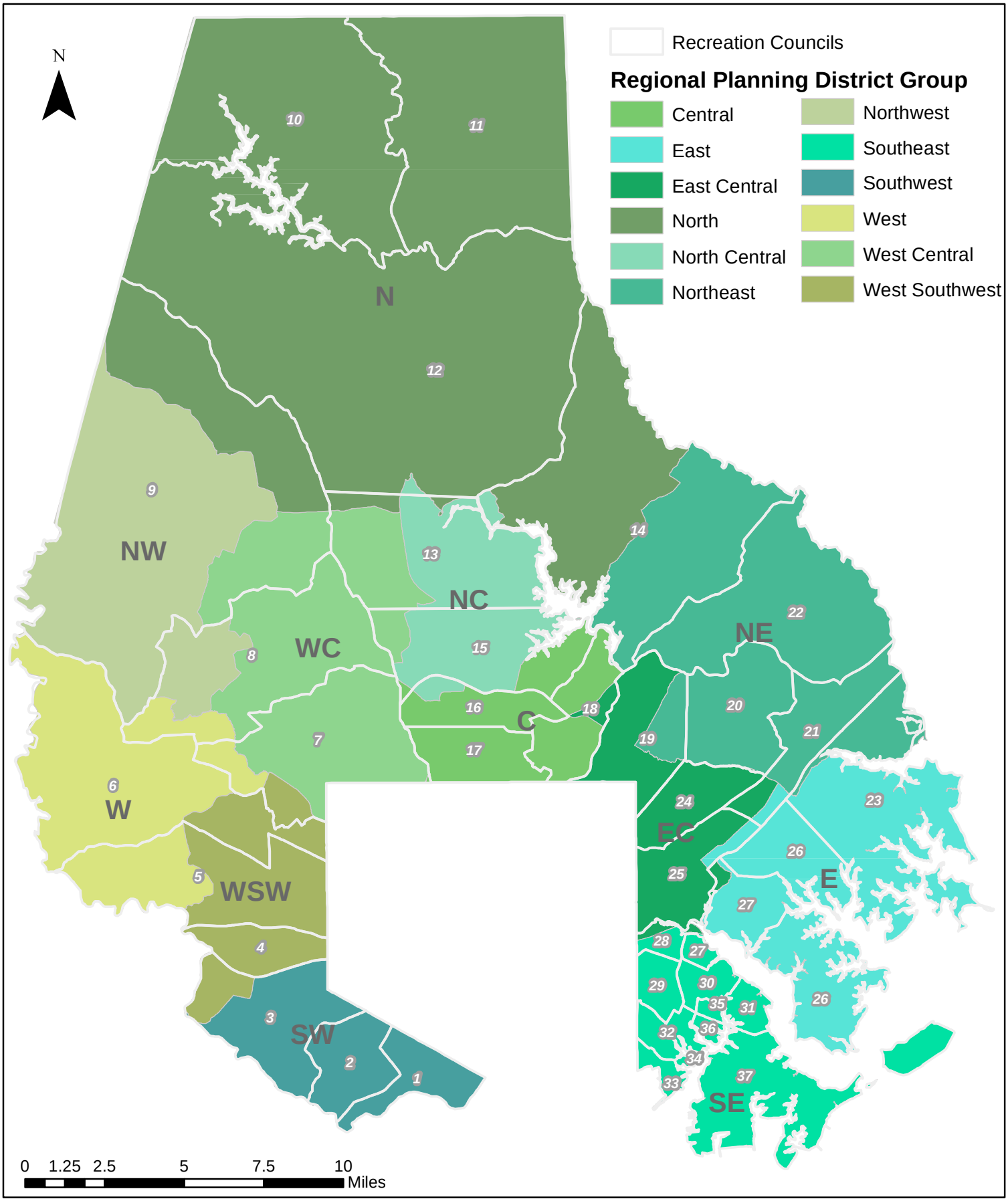


Figure 4. Regional Planning District Groupings

1.6 Demographic Characteristics

The Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) delineates between the urban portion of the County in which development and government services are concentrated, and the rural areas that are more natural and far less developed and populated. About a third of the area of the County is situated within the urban portion of the URDL.

The urban area includes residential and commercial community conservation areas, employment centers, the Towson Urban Center, the Owings Mills Growth Area, and the Middle River Redevelopment Area. The rural portion of the County features agricultural preservation areas, resource preservation areas, rural residential areas, and two rural commercial centers—Hereford and Jacksonville. Parts of this rural section of the County preserve the County's rich equine heritage that continues to this day. The URDL is represented in many of the maps in this report.

Community Conservation Areas are established communities and commercial centers in densely populated areas of the County, generally adjacent, or in close proximity, to Baltimore City. They are designated land management areas within Master Plan 2020. Targeted revitalization efforts seek to retain or enhance the areas' attractiveness and functionality.

The population of Baltimore County is projected to be approximately 860,500 in 2025. Population Density is generally highest in the urban regions surrounding Baltimore City. The Southwest, West Southwest, Central, and Eastern Central RPD groups are the most densely populated areas, using population estimates for 2025. The North RPD group, which is completely within the rural part of the county, is the least densely populated. From 2025 to 2035, the Northwest, East Central, and East RPD Groups are expected to see the greatest levels of population growth, around 4-6 percent.

Parks and recreation facilities are of particular importance within communities that are densely populated or growing in population, as much of the land may be converted from open space to residential and commercial developments. Several projects to provide open space, parks, and recreation centers are already underway in these areas. Less densely populated areas may still have needs for recreation facilities like athletic fields and indoor recreation, despite greater access to undeveloped land.



Figure 5. Urban Rural Demarcation Line

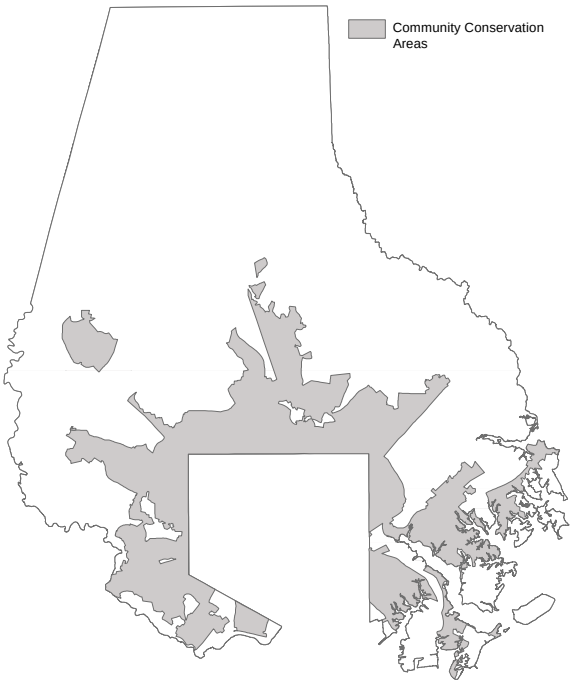


Figure 6. Community Conservation Areas

Population Density

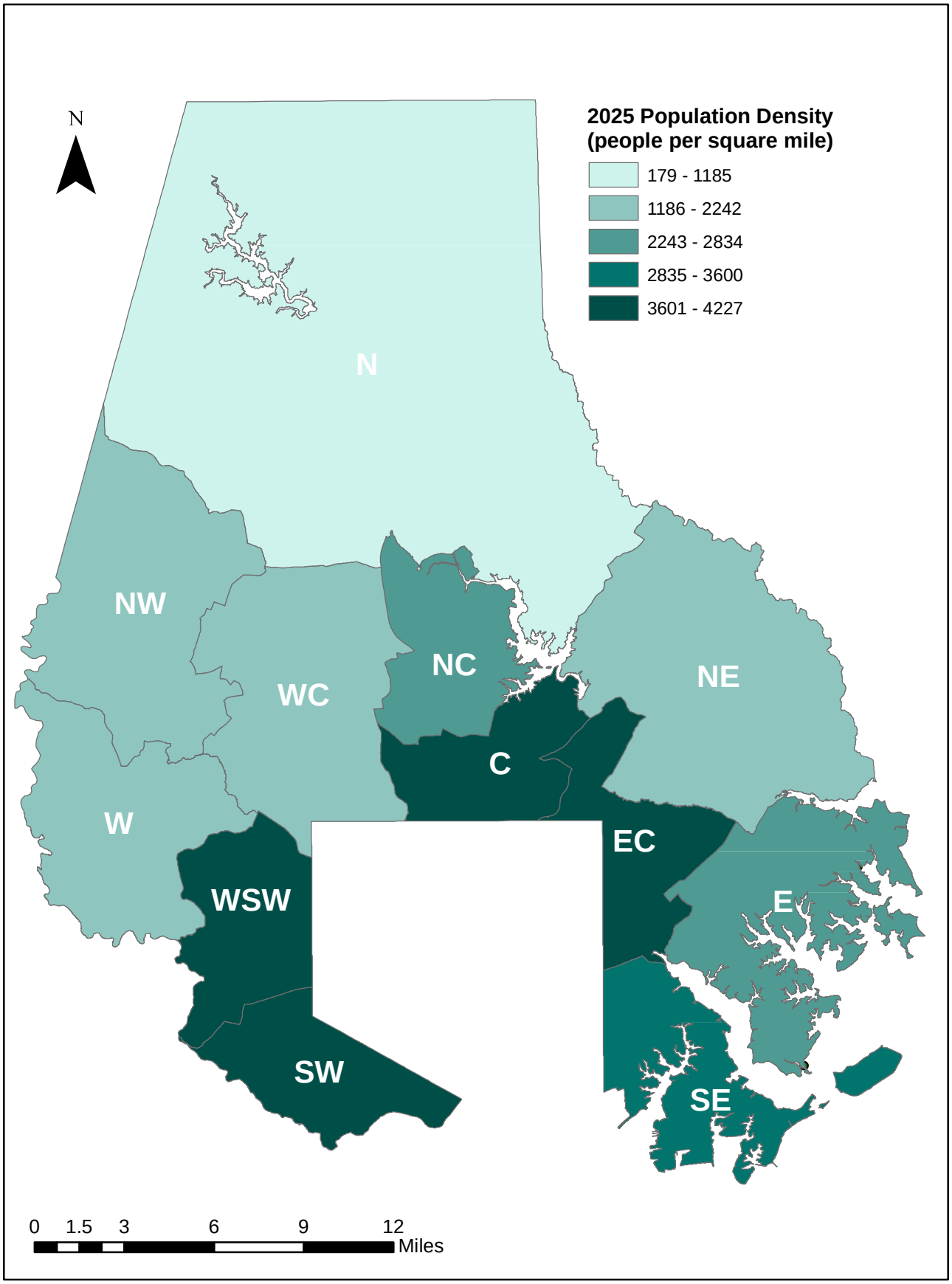


Figure 7. Population Density

Population Growth

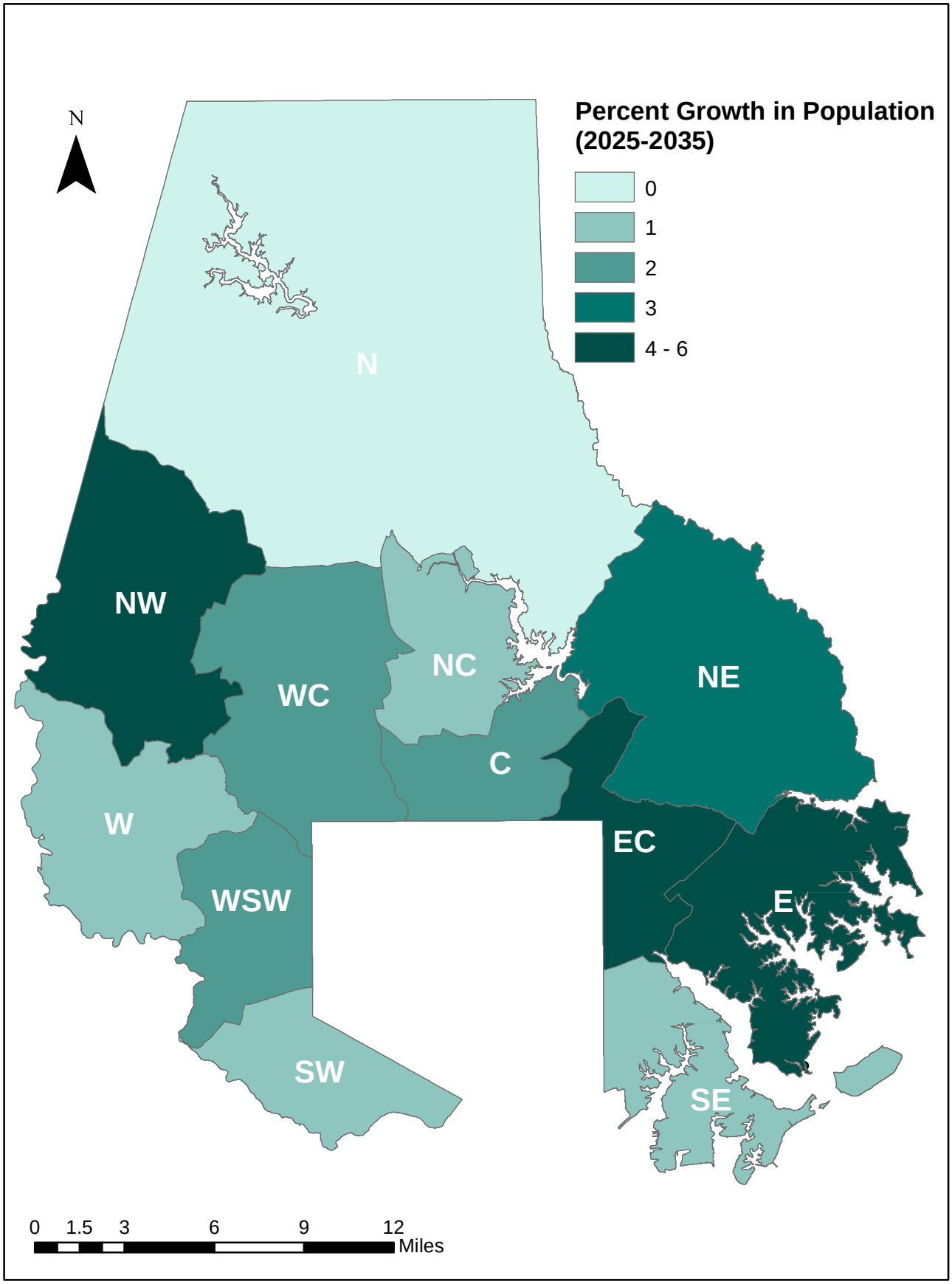
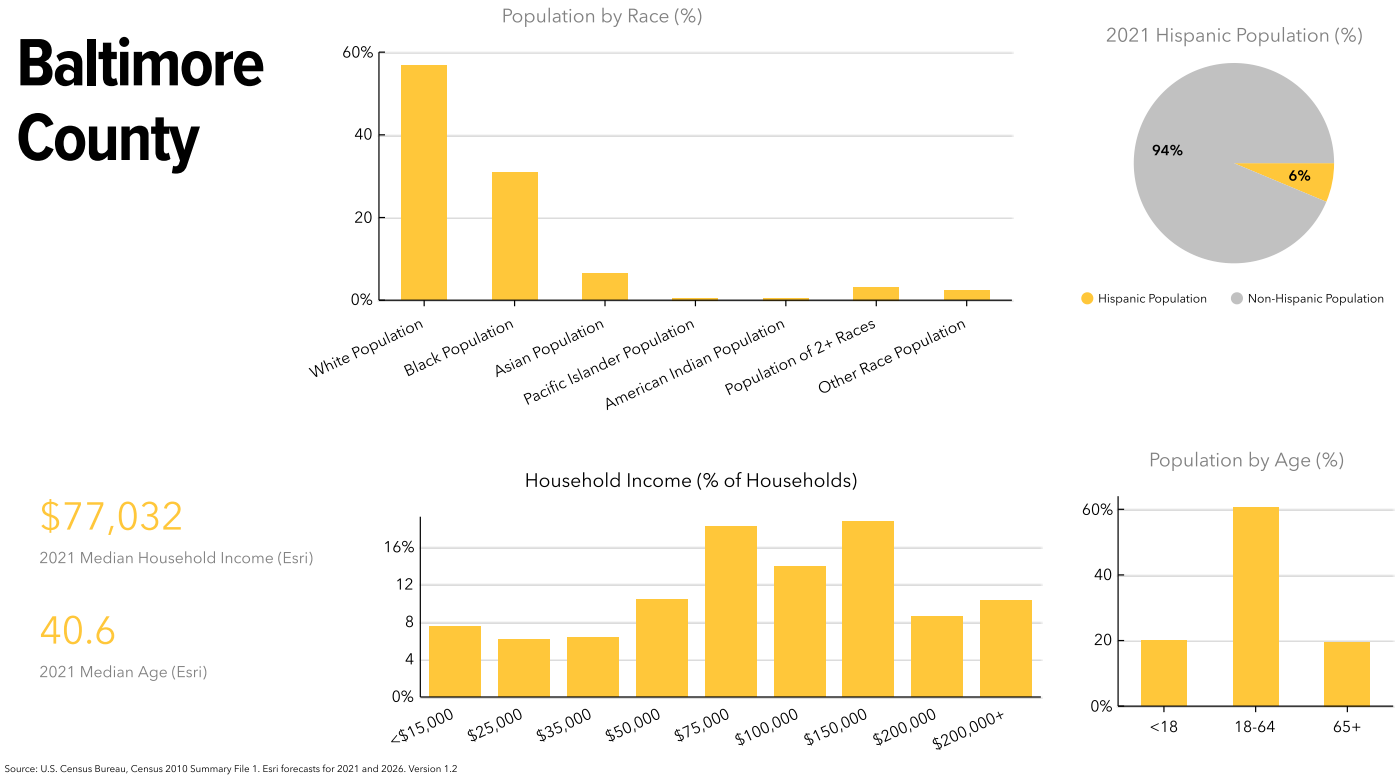


Figure 8. Percent Population Growth (2025-2035)

Baltimore County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 9. Demographic Characteristics, Baltimore County

The median income for all of Baltimore County is about $77,000 and the median age is 40.6 with about 20% of residents aged under 18 and 20% over 65+. Across the County, almost 60% of residents are White and about 30% are Black. About 6% of residents are Hispanic.

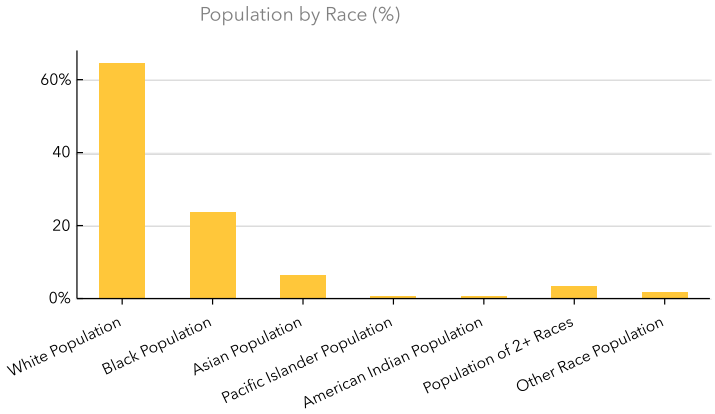
These demographic characteristics vary across the geography of Baltimore County. The following pages present demographic information on race, ethnicity, income, and age for each of the regional planning district groups. Discussions of demographics and vulnerable populations are continued at the end of Chapter Four.

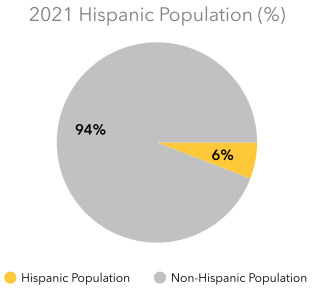
The highest median income ($120,632) and age (48.8) are in the North RPD group, while the lowest median income ($56,516) is in the Southeast and the lowest median age (36.3) is in the Central RPD Group, which is home to two colleges/universities. The Northwest RPD Group has the highest percentage of Hispanic population (11%). A majority of residents are Black in the West (76%) and West Southwest (74%). The North Central has the highest percentage of Asian Residents (14%).

In recent years, Baltimore County has responded to requests from residents to better serve our diverse and changing population. For example, Latino/a residents have requested futsal courts and so several basketball/rollerhockey courts have been converted. In addition, a cricket field was created at Cloverland Park in response to requests from a group of primarily South Asian American residents. Finally, while pickleball has grown in popularity with all ages, retired and 65+ residents have been particularly vocal about making these facilities more abundant. Lines have been added to several multipurpose and tennis courts and there are plans for additional conversions. Changing demographics may create a need for new and different facilities and we aim to respond to residents' requests.

The following pages show demographic characteristics that may influence recreational needs, as we aim especially to serve youth and seniors and communities with lower incomes, who may not be able to afford private recreational amenities and programs. While the demographics provide a background, consultation with communities remains the primary method to best understand the recreational needs of Baltimore County residents.

Central Regional Planning District Group



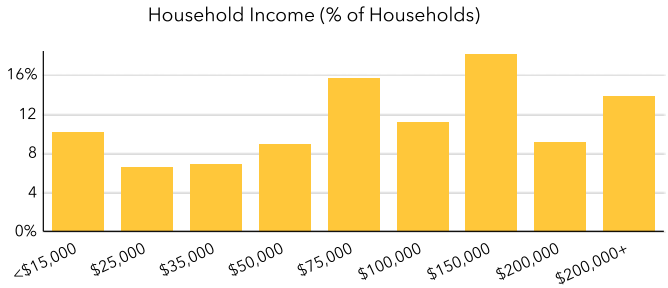


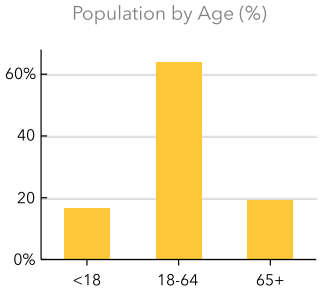
$78,975

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

36.3

2021 Median Age (Esri)

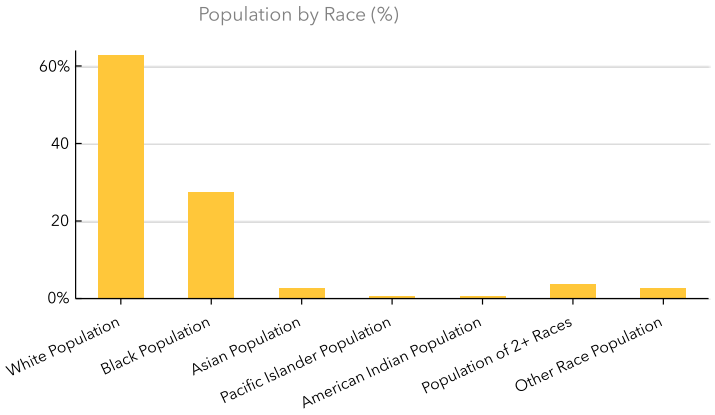


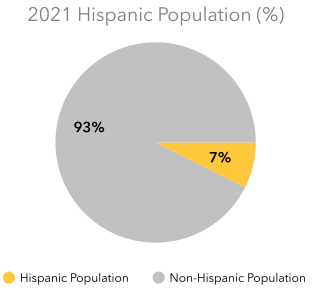


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 10. Demographic Characteristics, Central RPD Group

East Regional Planning District Group



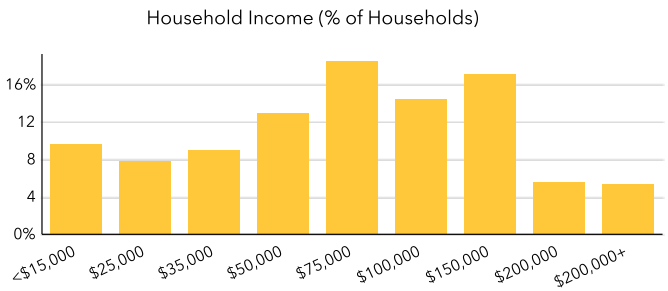


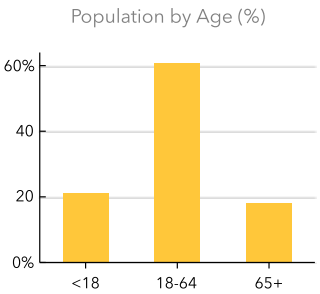
$62,242

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

39.2

2021 Median Age (Esri)

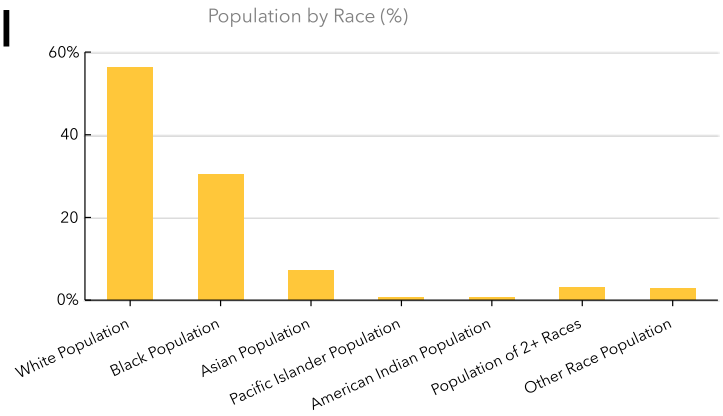


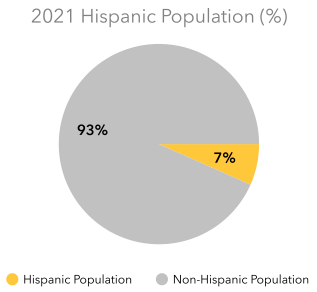


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 11. Demographic Characteristics, East RPD Group

East Central Regional Planning District Group



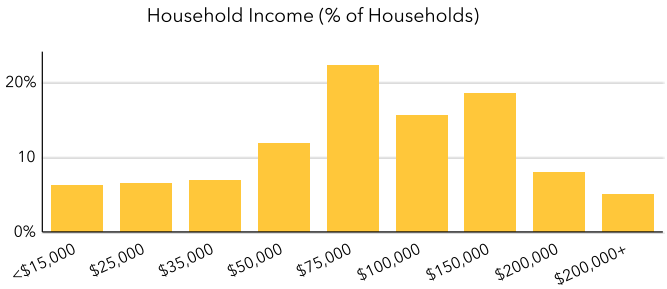


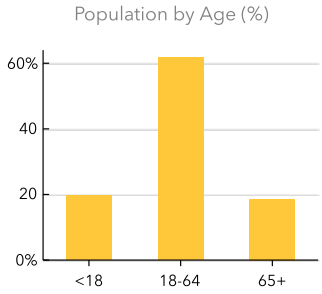
$69,925

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

40.2

2021 Median Age (Esri)

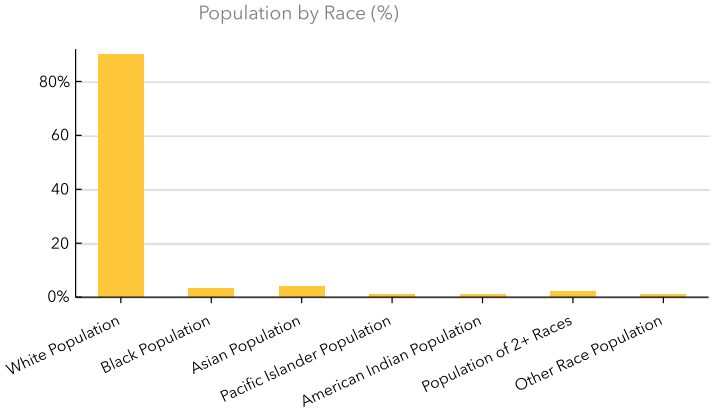


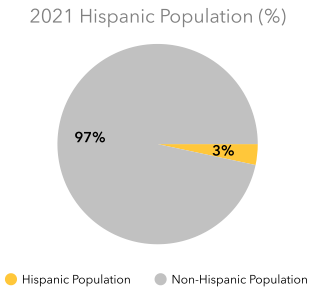


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 12. Demographic Characteristics, East Central RPD Group

North Regional Planning District Group



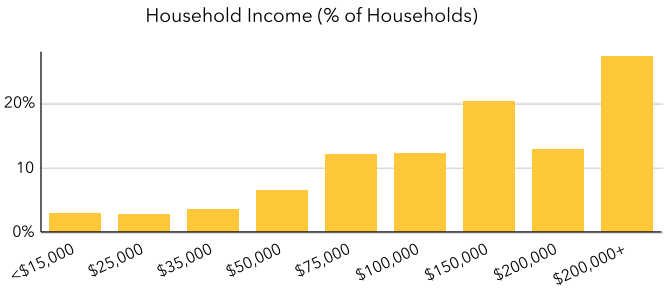


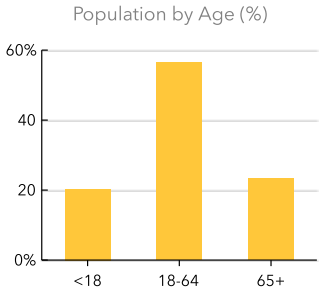
$120,632

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

48.8

2021 Median Age (Esri)

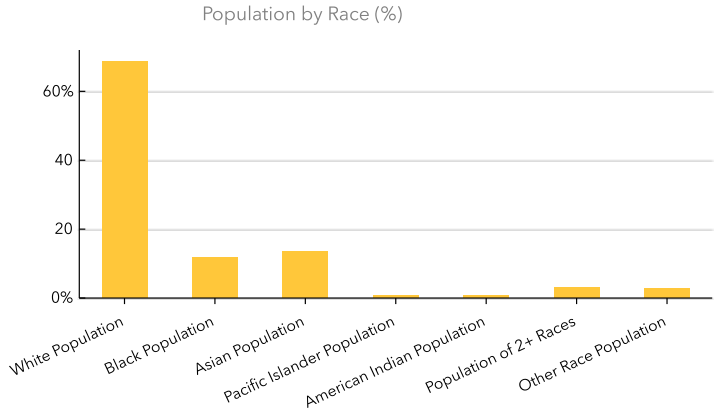


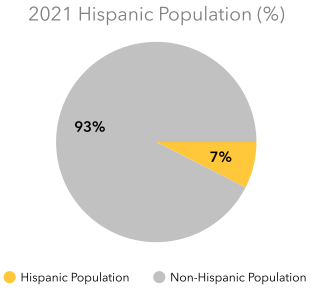


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 13. Demographic Characteristics, North RPD Group

North Central Regional Planning District Group



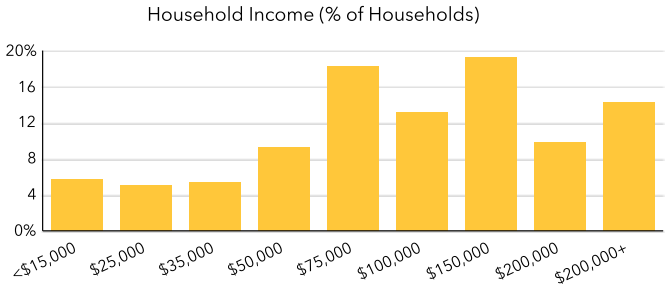


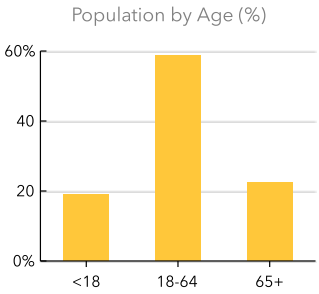
$85,597

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

43.6

2021 Median Age (Esri)

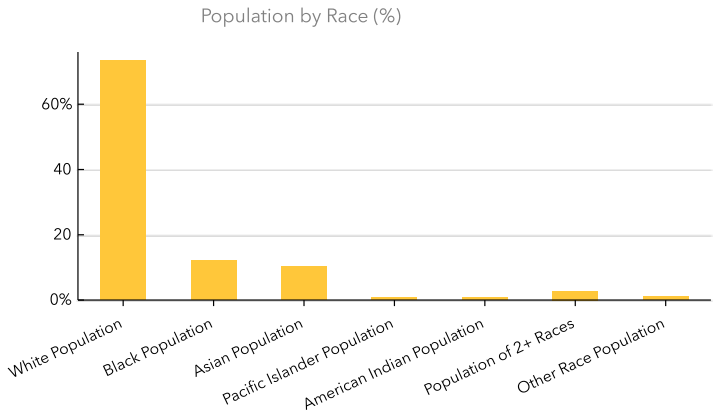


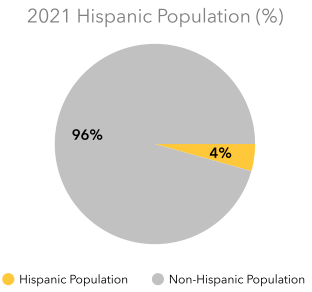


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 14. Demographic Characteristics, North Central RPD Group

Northeast Regional Planning District Group



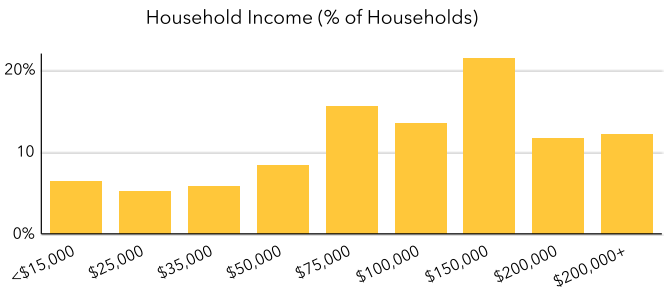


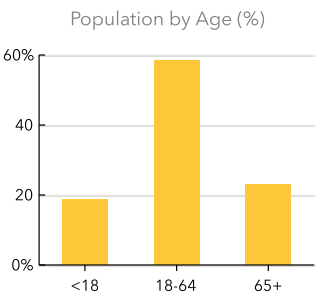
$89,485

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

44.0

2021 Median Age (Esri)

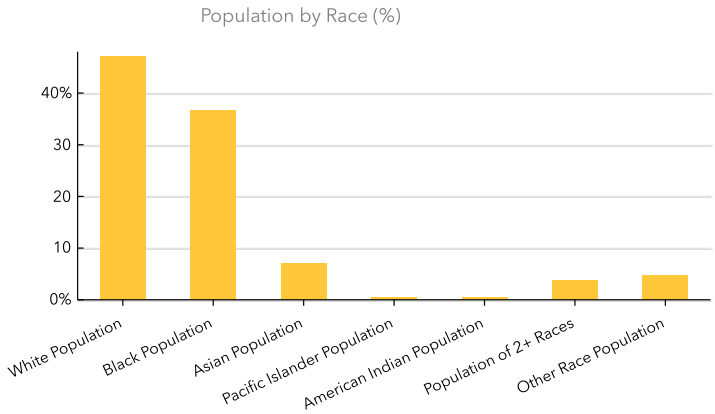


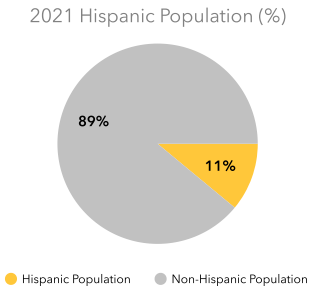


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 15. Demographic Characteristics, Northeast RPD Group

Northwest Regional Planning District Group



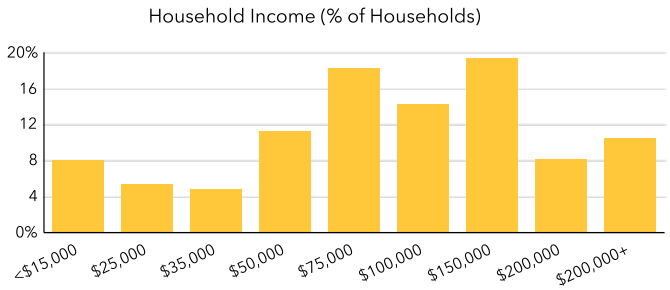


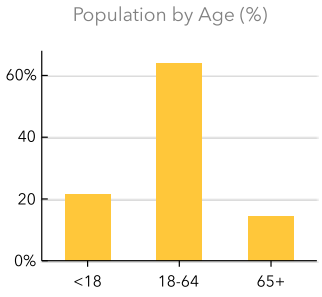
$78,112

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

37.2

2021 Median Age (Esri)

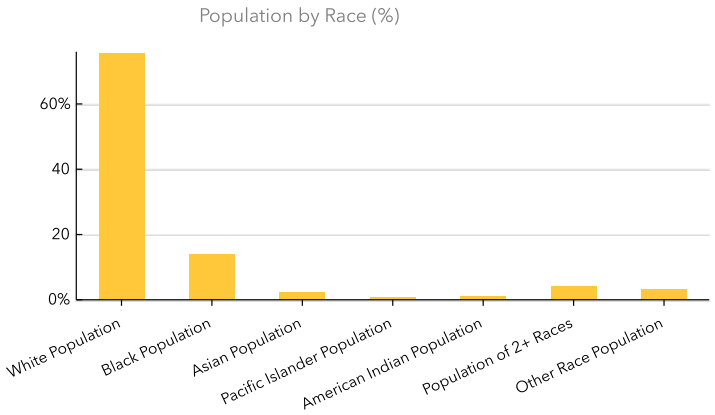


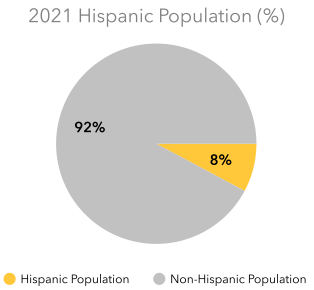


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 16. Demographic Characteristics, Northwest RPD Group

Southeast Regional Planning District Group



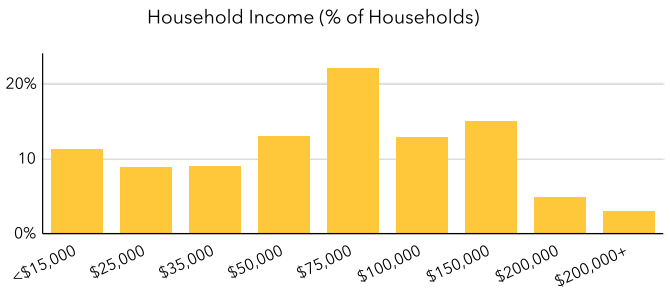


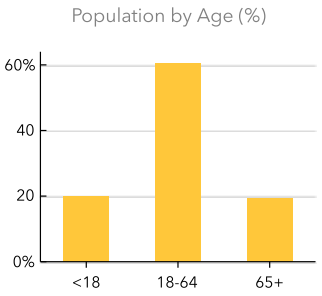
$56,516

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

40.8

2021 Median Age (Esri)

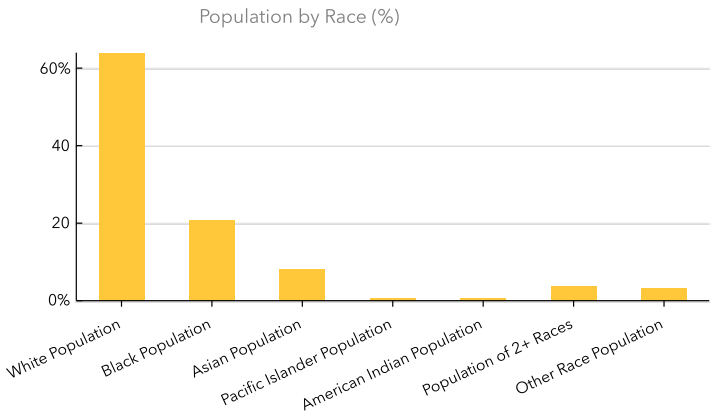


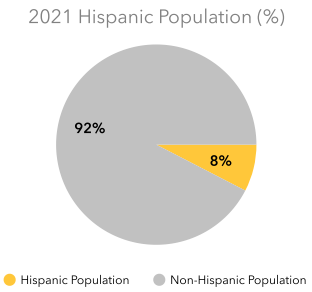


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 17. Demographic Characteristics, Southeast RPD Group

Southwest Regional Planning District Group



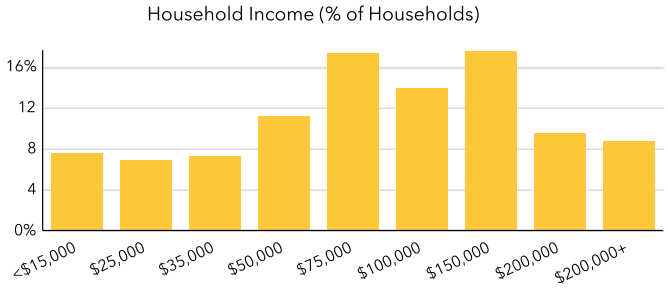


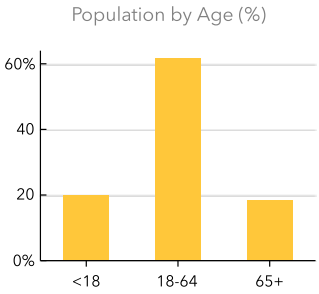
$74,318

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

38.1

2021 Median Age (Esri)

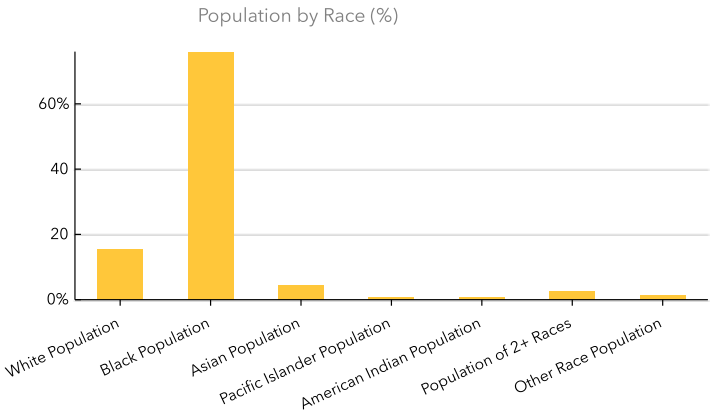


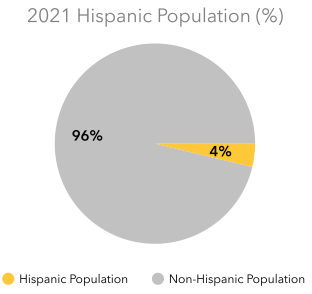


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 18. Demographic Characteristics, Southwest RPD Group

West Regional Planning District Group



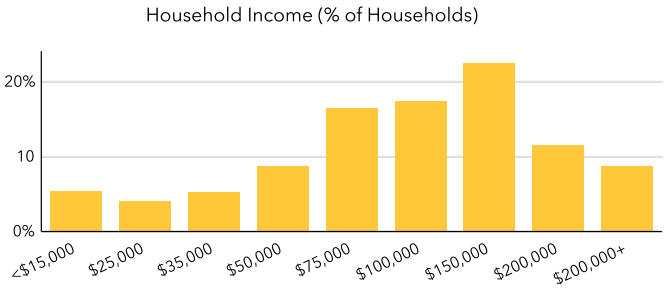


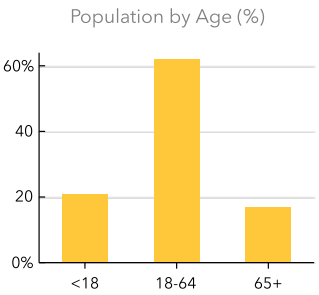
$87,523

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

39.9

2021 Median Age (Esri)

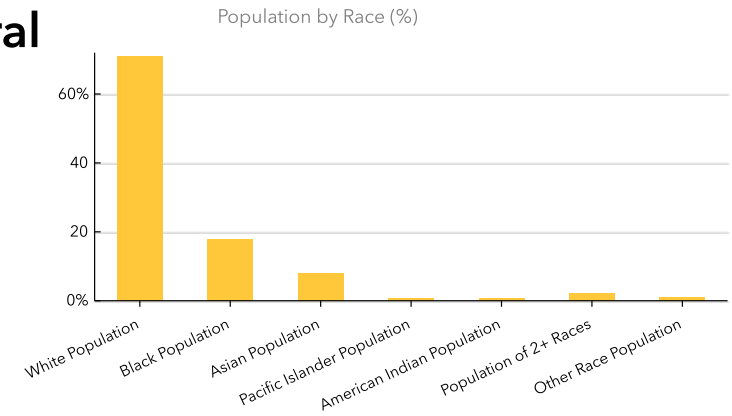


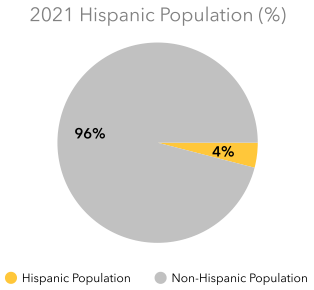


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 19. Demographic Characteristics, West RPD Group

West Central Regional Planning District Group



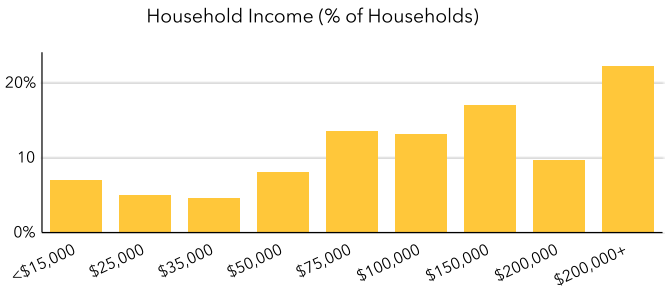


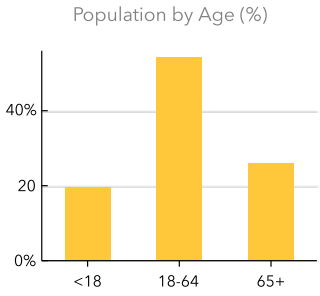
$96,799

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

47.3

2021 Median Age (Esri)

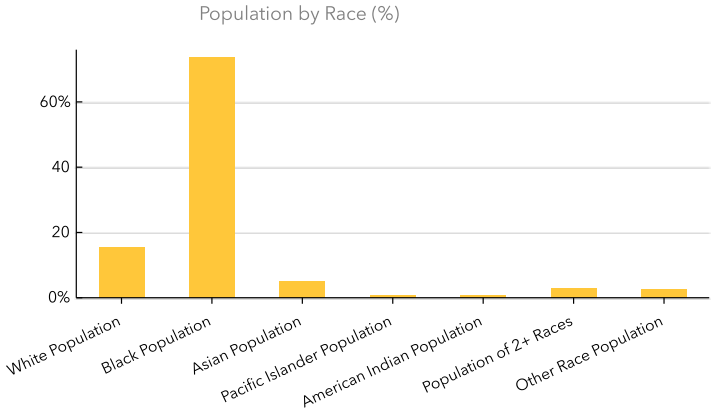


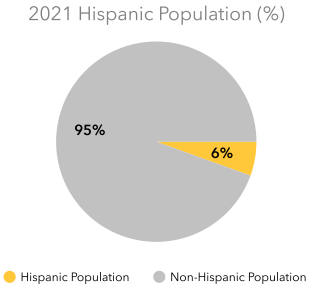


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 20. Demographic Characteristics, West Central RPD Group

West Southwest Regional Planning District Group



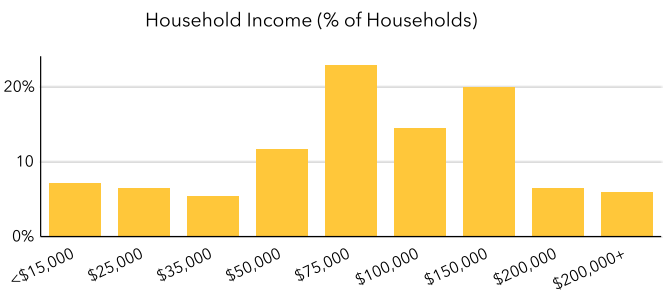


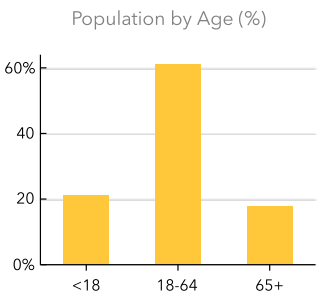
$69,724

2021 Median Household Income (Esri)

39.5

2021 Median Age (Esri)





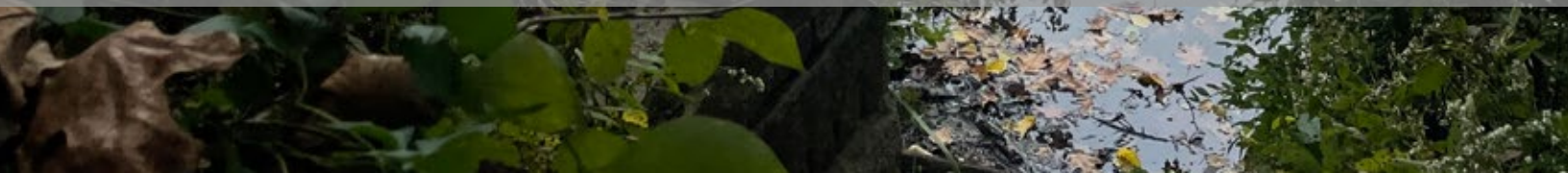
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 21. Demographic Characteristics, West Southwest RPD Group



CHAPTER TWO

RECREATION AND PARKS INVENTORY



2.1 Introduction







The Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks aims to provide diverse recreational opportunities to all residents through the provision of parks, open spaces, and specialized recreational facilities. This chapter inventories the publicly and privately held park and open space, detailing the different characteristics and uses of various park types, such as neighborhood parks, regional parks, and school recreation centers.

Quality parks are important for the overall livability of a place, contributing to improvements in public health, environmental health, and the economy. These spaces enable exercise, contributing to physical health, and provide a place for social activities or a quiet retreat, which is important for mental health. These areas are particularly needed in the urban areas of the County, where much of the land has been developed for housing, business, and retail. As greenspaces with permeable surfaces and forested areas, parks improve water quality, which is a priority within our Chesapeake Bay watershed. Parks are valued by residents, making Baltimore County a desirable place to live, and therefore contribute to our economy.

Baltimore County has an impressive park system including 13 square miles of County parks, 5 square miles of school recreation centers, and 5.5 square miles of County-owned open space, in addition to state and national parks. These provide great benefits to residents and attract visitors from neighboring counties.

As Baltimore County aims to serve residents equitably, we continue to assess the distribution of parks and facilities and seek to understand the needs of the diverse communities we serve. Chapter 2 solely creates an inventory of the land. Chapter 3 will consider public input and Chapter 4 will analyze the level of service provided to each community to better understand how well recreation and parks needs are being met across the County.

2.2 - Public Parks and Recreation Properties

Baltimore County has an extensive and diverse collection of preserved lands that greatly contribute to residents' quality of life, health of the natural environment, and character of both the rural and urban parts of the County. Such lands are the venues for many forms of recreation, provide places for communities and citizens to gather, and protect invaluable natural resources. The types of recreational facilities, parks, and open spaces available to Baltimore County residents are defined below.

County Parks (8,311 acres):

This category of preserved lands includes Baltimore County Recreation and Parks properties and leased recreation sites that feature some form of permanent recreational facility enhancement(s). The types of parks varies widely, from small neighborhood-serving sites of less than a half-acre with only a playground as the sole improvement, to the ~1,100-acre Oregon Ridge Park and its myriad recreational facilities. Leased sites include properties the County leases from civic organizations, churches, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. One unique site included in this classification is the BeeTree Preserve in northern Baltimore County, for which a conservation and public recreation access easement was purchased from its owners, the Towson Presbyterian Church.

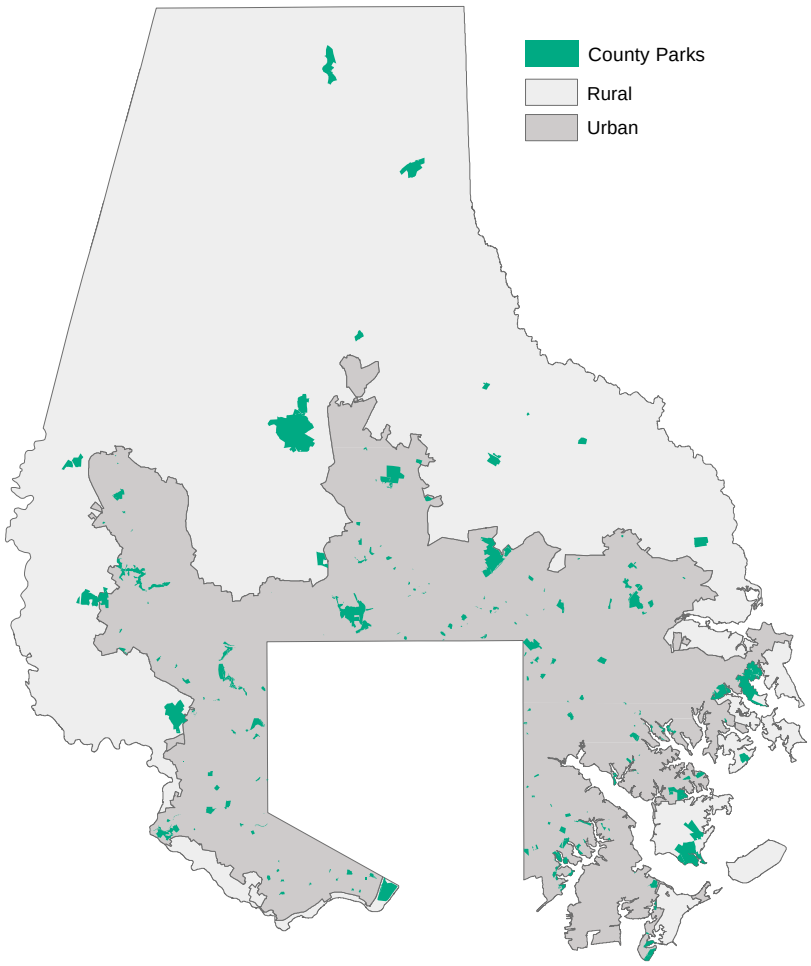


Figure 22. County Parks

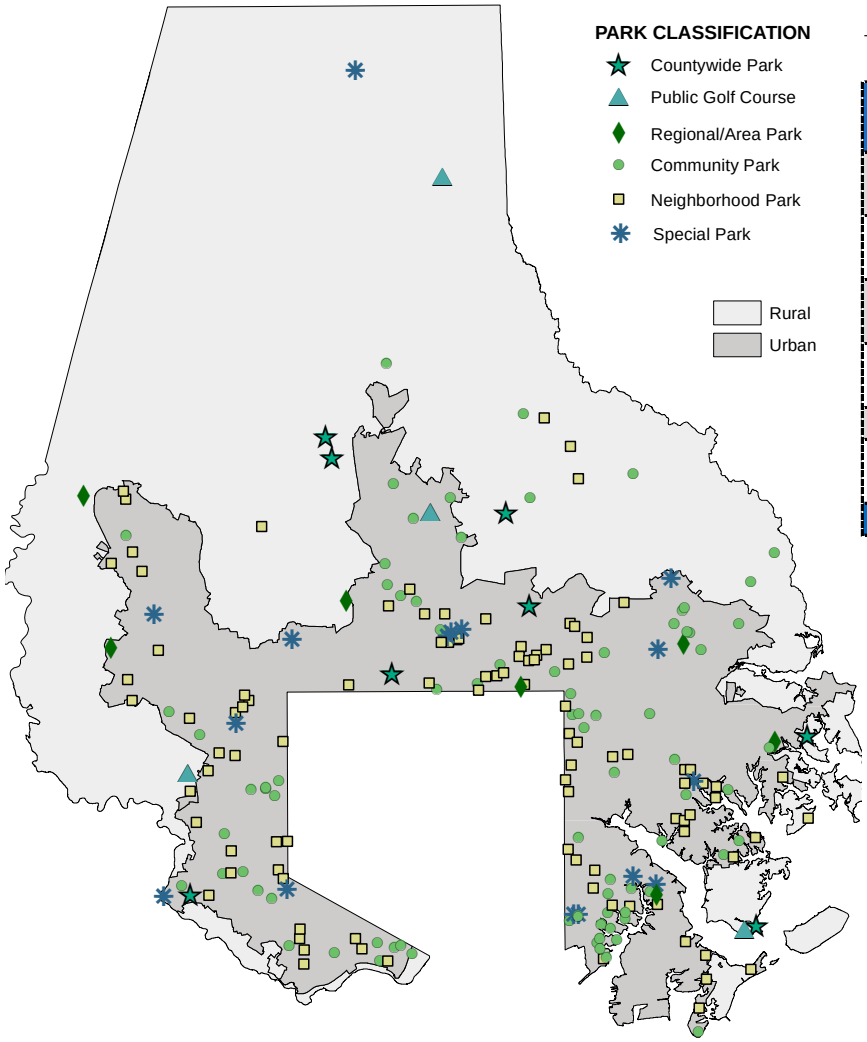


Figure 23. County Parks by Classification

Table 2. Park Classification Acreage Summary

Park Classification	Number of Sites	Acres	Average Acres
Countywide Park	8	2917	364.6
Public Golf Course	4	1099	274.6
Regional/Area Park	7	853	121.8
Community Park	80	2033	25.4
Special Park	16	688	43.0
Neighborhood Park	100	722	7.2
Total	**215**	**8,311**	**39**

The map above shows the types of County parks, followed by a table that shows the quantity of such parks countywide. The classification of parks in an imprecise process, and in numerous cases the class of an individual site has been revised on occasion. This reflects the diverse nature of the County's parks, and the wide range of recreational facilities that may be available. At one point in time DRP, like many jurisdictions throughout the nation, used a static acreage-base classification. However, this method did not accurately reflect the roles and nature of many parks. For instance, a 5-10 acre site that is developed with numerous recreational facilities may better serve the public (including recreation council programs) than a 60-acre site that is mostly natural and has few facilities. A facility such as the Randallstown Community Center, which is classified as a community park/recreation site, may also draw patrons from well outside the community as a result of its special facilities such as the pool and indoor walking track.

Countywide Parks: This classification pertains to the County parks with the largest overall service areas, extending to the entirety of the County and beyond. The majority of the larger County park sites, such as Oregon Ridge Park (1,100 acres) and Cromwell Valley Park (455 acres), fall within this category. This classification would also include a specialized site such as the Loch Raven Fishing Center, which provides anglers with access to Loch Raven Reservoir. Most of the County's interpretive centers and parks, including Marshy Point, Banneker, and the Ag. Center and Farm Park, are also considered countywide parks. A commonality of the countywide parks are the major facilities that draw park visitors from far and wide—interpretive centers, golf courses, concert facilities such as those at Oregon Ridge Park, large networks of hiking trails, etc.

Regional Parks: This park class includes sites with the next largest service areas, with the included parks and recreation sites each serving substantial portions of the County. In some cases the regional parks or certain facilities at the parks will have a designated primary and secondary service area that defines the priority of use provided for the recreation councils in their service area. Such is the case with sites such as Honeygo Run Regional Park, Reisterstown Regional Park, Eastern Regional Park, and the Northeast Regional Recreation Center, among other parks. The majority of regional parks feature numerous and/or specialized recreational facilities, such as indoor and outdoor sports complexes. One, the Reisterstown Sportsplex at Reisterstown Regional Park, features both an indoor sports field and an indoor ice rink (the latter operated by the Revenue Authority). Some of the regional parks, such as Northwest, Meadowood, Honeygo, and Eastern Regional Parks, also feature substantial paved paths (and in the case of Honeygo, nature trails) that have proven to be very popular and utilized year-round.

Community Parks: This classification of parks is considered to have service areas that are generally associated with a community or one or more local recreation councils. The facilities are of a type and scale as to draw regular use by recreation council programs, or contain an amenity that draws visitors from beyond the immediate neighborhood—a boat ramp or picnic pavilions, for example. Most of the County's community and recreation centers are situated at sites classified as community parks, with a few examples being the Banneker Community Center, Jacksonville Community Center (at Sweet Air Park), Fullerton Community Center, and Watersedge Community Center. In some instances, such as with the Woodlawn Community Center and the Soukup Arena, the center is the sole recreational facility situated at the site. Community centers, together with public school recreation centers (described later in this section), provide the venues for the vast majority of organized programs of the recreation councils.

Neighborhood Parks: This is the most numerous of the park classifications, with the most local and limited of service areas. The line between the community and neighborhood park classifications is sometimes very fine, with the overall deciding factor being whether or not the park features amenities regularly utilized by the local recreation council, or which frequently draw users from beyond the immediate neighborhood. In some cases a neighborhood park could be reclassified as a community park, or vice-versa, as classification of sites is not a precise science. The most common type of facility found in a neighborhood park is playground/tot lot equipment. In many cases playgrounds are the only recreational facility at a neighborhood park. Some other common facilities found at this class of park includes multi-purpose courts and relatively small ball diamonds and athletic fields that are not large enough to support most recreation council programs, but are perfect for local pick-up ball games. Very few of the neighborhood parks include on-site parking, as the expectation is that most visitors will live or work nearby, and will not use motorized transportation to travel to such parks.

Special Parks: This classification covers an assortment of park sites that do not truly fit well within the prior classification of parks. This category includes the historical sites Aquila Randall Monument, Battle Acre Park and Monument, Fort Garrison, and Perry Hall Mansion, all of which are sites where a historical feature is the focal point. Major stand-alone trails are also included—the Catonsville Short Line Trail, the Milford Mill Trail at Villa Nova Park, the Number Nine Trolley Line Trail, and the Red Run Trail and Greenway. Two memorial-focused parks in Towson are likewise included—Olympian Park and Cancer Survivors Park. Finally, this classification includes the BeeTree Preserve in northern Baltimore County, a nearly 250-acre site owned by the Towson Presbyterian Church, for which a conservation and public recreation access exists.

School Recreation Centers (3,721 acres)

The vast majority of public schools in Baltimore County serve dual roles as both educational and recreational facilities under an established joint-use agreement between DRP and the County's Board of Education. The school recreation centers (SRCs) provide invaluable indoor and outdoor recreation facilities that are typically heavily utilized by the programs of local recreation councils, and which many local residents regularly utilize when school is not in session. Many SRCs have been jointly funded by the Board of Education and DRP, and it is not unusual for DRP to fund site enhancements such as the highly popular and much demanded artificial turf fields at SRCs.

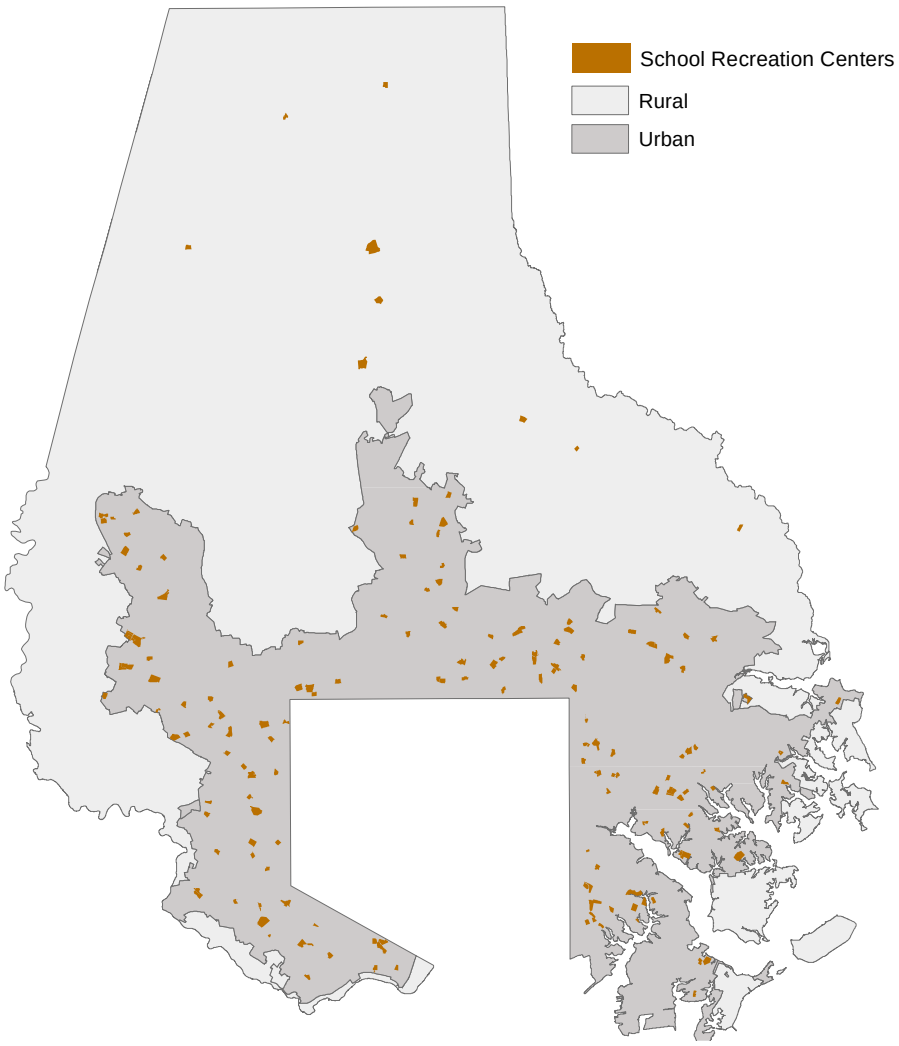


Figure 24. School Recreation Centers

Elementary, middle, and high SRCs typically provide different kinds and quantities of facilities. Commonplace indoor facilities at SRCs include gymnasiums, auditoriums/theaters, and activity rooms, and in some instances, local recreation offices are situated within the school structure. Outdoor recreation facilities often found at SRCs vary more by school type. Elementary SRCs usually feature a small number of ball diamonds and athletic fields, playground equipment areas, and one or more multi-purpose courts. Some will also have tennis courts (usually two). Middle SRCs will typically have more fields and diamonds than elementary SRCs, and both tennis and multi-purpose courts. High SRCs usually have the same outdoor facilities as middle SRCs, but with a larger quantity of most such outdoor facilities, and with many more illuminated with facility lighting systems. Another increasingly more common facility at high SRCs are artificial turf fields, which are operated under a specialized use agreement. Many such fields were funded through DRP, and in some cases substantial donations from local recreation councils and the school sports booster groups contributed towards field funding.

Following is a count of the public SRC sites in Baltimore County. In a few situations, two SRCs will exist at the same physical sites, in which case they are symbolized on the map as the larger school class but are counted as only one site in the table below. As an example, Sparrows Point Middle and High SRCs are situated on the same site, as are West Towson Elementary SRC and Ridge Ruxton School. Special schools are placed into the most suitable of the three primary school categories.

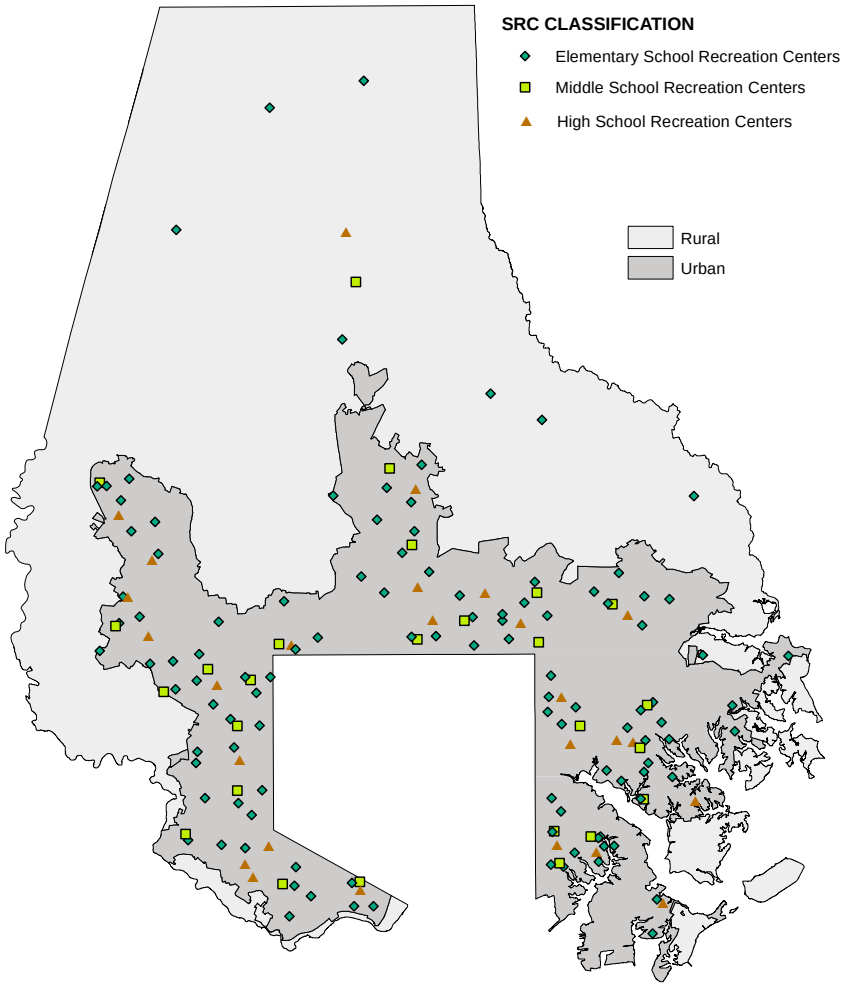


Figure 25. School Recreation Centers by Classification

Table 3. SRC Acreage Summary

SRC Classification	Number of Sites	Acres	Average Acres
Elementary School Recreation Centers	111	1856	16.7
Middle School Recreation Centers	26	768	29.5
High School Recreation Centers	26	1062	40.8
Total	**163**	**3,686**	**23**

Special Facilities

In addition to SRCs, Interpretive Centers, Community Centers, and PAL Centers provide recreational opportunities, including indoor recreation and organized activities. Interpretive Centers include nature centers, historical centers, and the agriculture center. These centers provide programming primarily for youth. Community Centers and PAL Centers have a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities as well as programming and spaces available for rent.

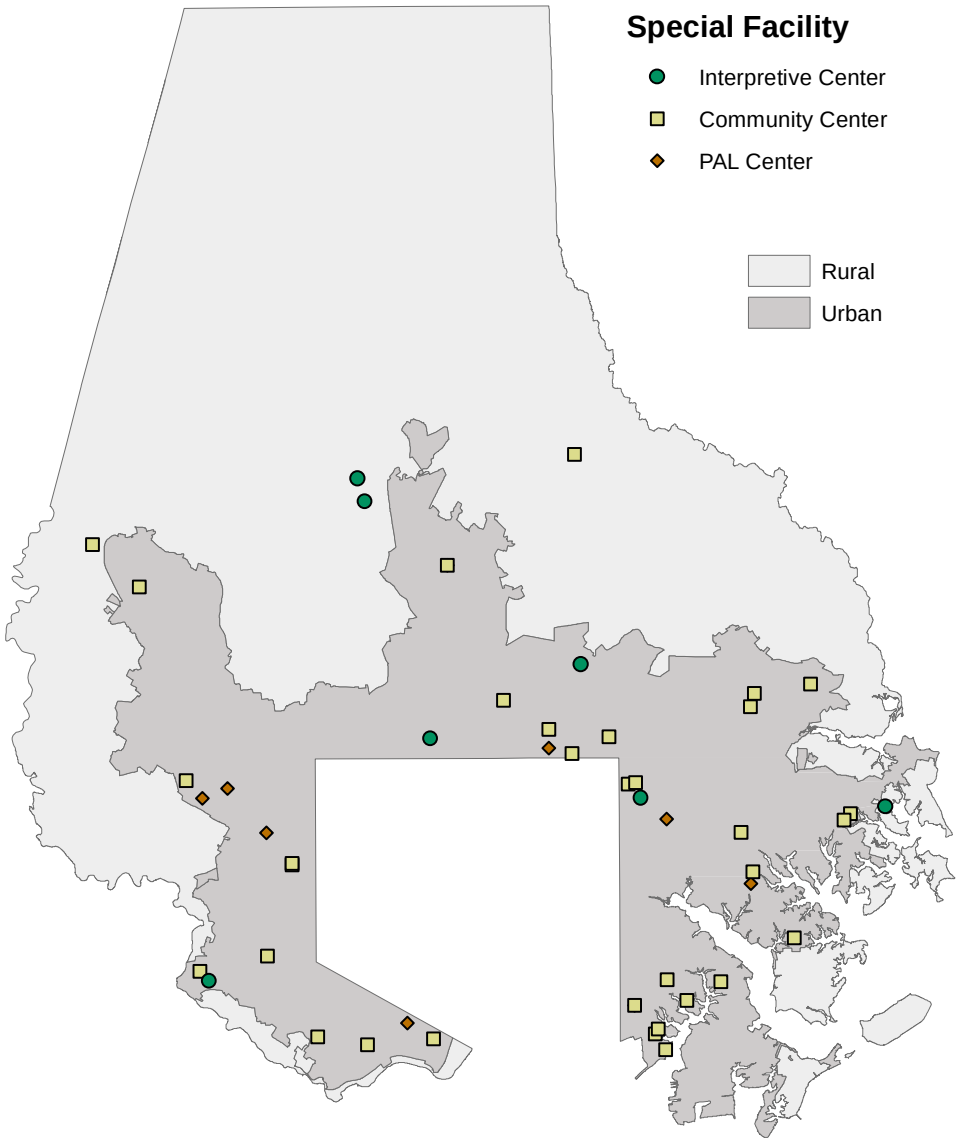


Figure 26. Special Facilities by Type

County-Owned Open Spaces (3,548 acres)

This site classification includes local open spaces (LOS) deeded to the County through its development management process, park and school recreation center sites that have not been developed/improved, and other miscellaneous open space lands assigned to DRP's inventory. Such sites that have been improved have been reclassified as parks. This category also includes extensive undeveloped greenway lands along various rivers and streams throughout the County. The nature of open spaces varies widely, from open, gently sloping areas conducive for both non-organized and active recreational uses, to wooded tracts and stream valleys.

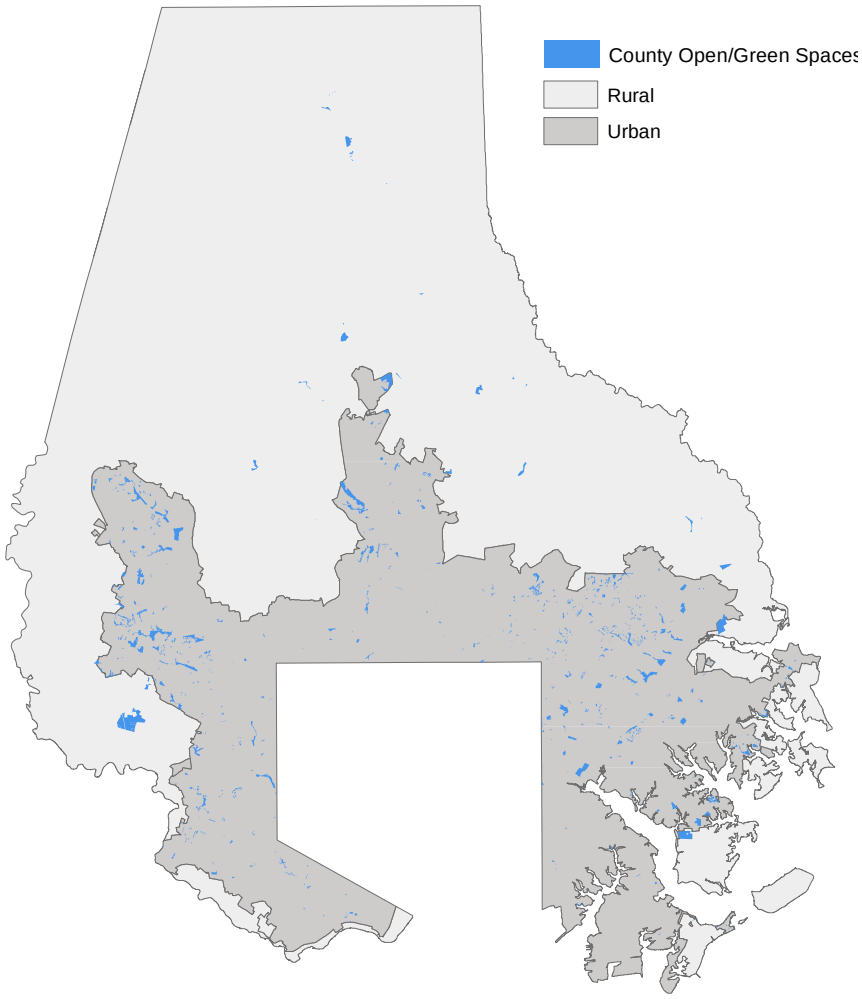


Figure 27. County-Owned Open Spaces

Other County-Owned Lands (2,365 acres)

In addition to DRP, Baltimore County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS) and Department of Public Works (DPW) administer substantial amounts of land dedicated to preservation and conservation. This includes publicly-owned lands such as forest conservation reservations and flood plain and drainage reservations. The latter are very similar to parks and open spaces along stream valleys. The primary role of these lands is to protect the natural environment, though public access remains permissible, and many citizens use such areas as nearby opportunities to "escape to nature." This category does not include storm water management ponds, nor forest conservation, flood plain, steep slope, or drainage easements .

Both county-owned open spaces and other county green spaces may include sites suitable for parks. Relatively flat, grassy open spaces are often usable for many forms of recreation, generally supporting the immediate neighborhood in which they are situated. Stream valleys, wooded tracts, and steeply sloped natural areas may not be appropriate for park improvements. Most of the properties in this category are small, resulting in a widespread, scattered pattern in the map. Most of the green space sites are situated within the urban portion of the URDL, though some substantial green spaces such as the preserved lands on the Back River Peninsula and the undeveloped Granite, Belfast Road, and Days Cove Park Sites are situated in the URDL's rural areas.

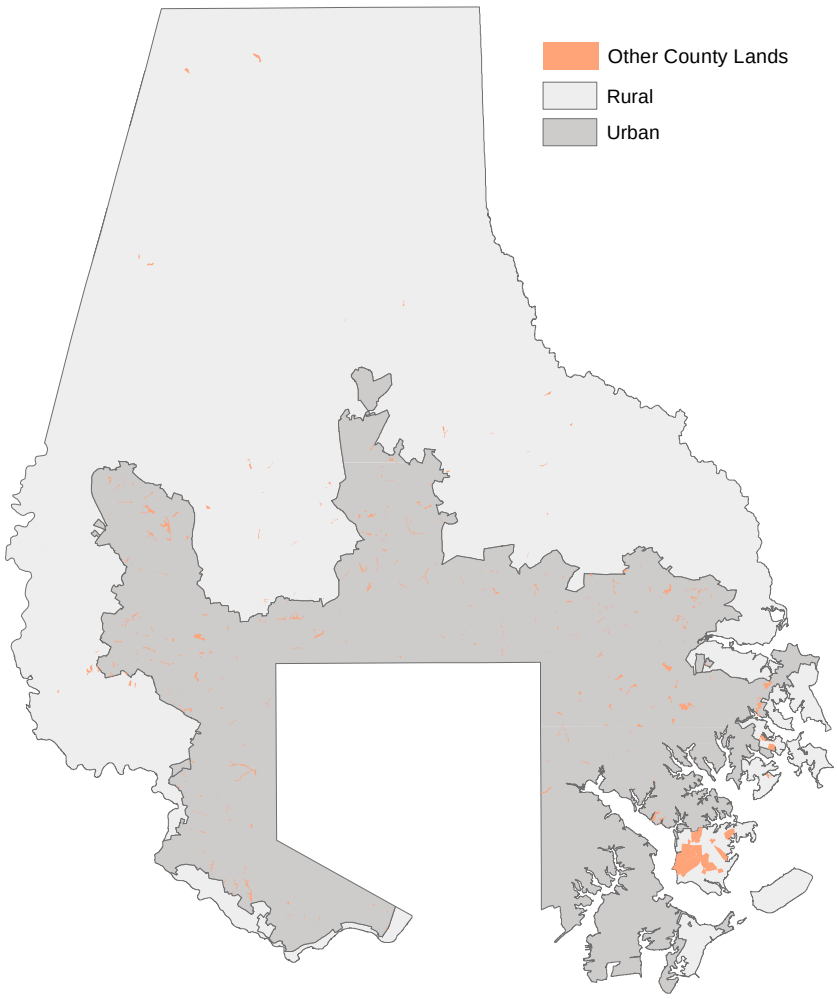


Figure 28. Other County-Owned Greenspaces

Baltimore City Reservoir Watershed Properties (14,679 acres)

There are three Baltimore City-owned and managed reservoirs either fully or partially within Baltimore County—Loch Raven, Liberty, and Prettyboy. While the primary role of the reservoirs is to hold the waters that serve the Baltimore metropolitan area's citizens, the extensive lands surrounding these water bodies contain sizable networks of trails, with Loch Raven also housing a public golf course and a skeet and trap shooting range. The reservoirs themselves also provide recreational opportunities including boating (limited and restricted to protect the water quality) and fishing, with Loch Raven Reservoir featuring a fishing and boating center operated by Baltimore County Recreation and Parks. Various uses of the reservoirs and surrounding watershed property are guided by the Baltimore Watershed Agreement. Through the Cooperative Wildlife Management Area agreements, Maryland DNR helps to ensure recreational uses of the reservoir, including hunting, are safe for people and the environment .

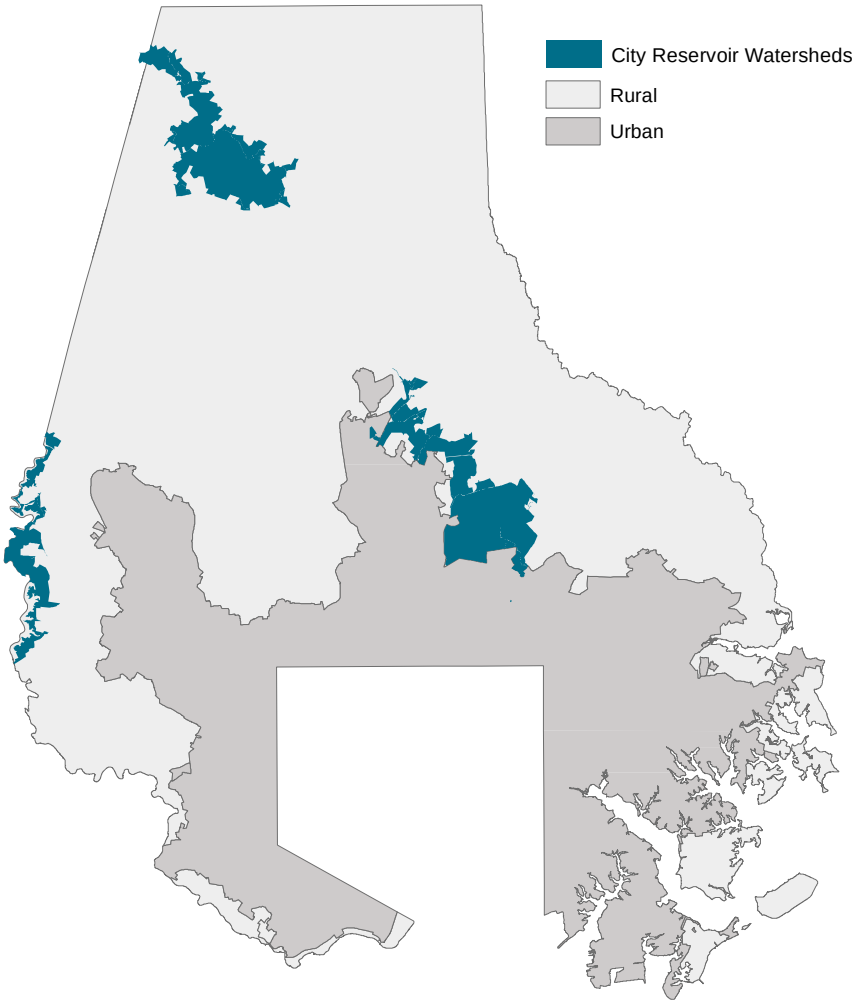


Figure 29. City Reservoir Properties

State and National Parks (22,236 acres)

Baltimore County is fortunate to be home to six vast properties administered by Maryland DNR-- Patapsco Valley State Park (Maryland's first State Park), Gunpowder Falls State Park, including the popular Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail, Hart-Miller Island State Park, North Point State Park, North Point State Battlefield, and the Soldiers Delight Natural Environment Area. The first two of these sites extend for dozens of miles and cross into neighboring counties. The majority of public hiking trails in Baltimore County are situated within the State Parks and sites, which also feature a wide range of natural resource-based recreational opportunities such as picnicking, camping, fishing, boating, interpretive programs, and more. The County also leases portions of three State Parks, which it operates as individual parks (Kingsville Park/Athletic Fields, Millers Island Tot Lot/Park) or as part of a larger park (Cromwell Valley Park). These properties are not included in the acreage count for State land. The County is also home to the Hampton National Historic Site, a property owned and operated by the National Park Service and which features a Georgian mansion and associated structures on a portion of lands once owned by one of the most prominent families in Maryland.

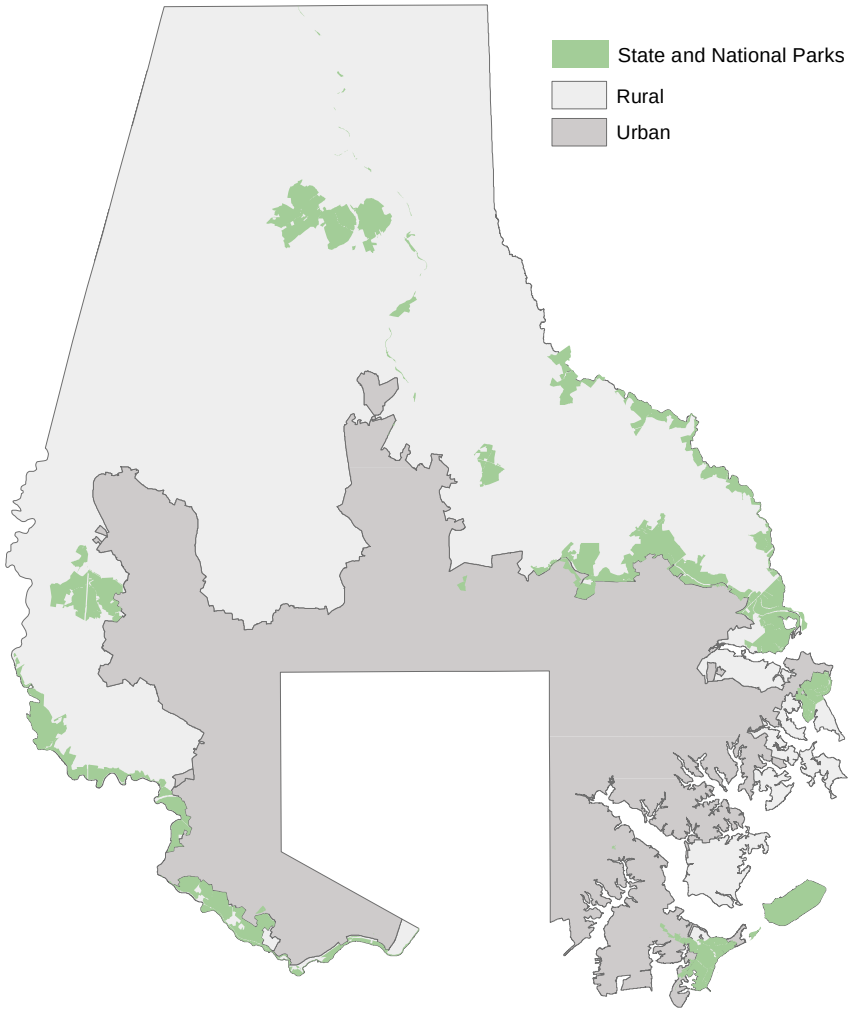


Figure 30. State and National Parks

2.3 Privately Owned Recreational Facilities and Parklands

Private Open Space (1,679 acres)

This category includes two overall types of open space. First and more extensive are open spaces preserved through the County's development process that have been deeded to entities such as homeowner and condo-owner associations. These spaces are much the same in nature as the County open spaces previously described, though not owned by the County. In some cases the sites have been improved with recreational facilities, and serve as local parks. The second type of lands within this category are the properties owned and administered by NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, an independent non-profit organization that works cooperatively with the County, and which seeks to preserve and sometimes enhance green spaces within the urban section of the County. The map does not include other private or non-profit recreation sites such as YMCA's, Girls and Boys Clubs, Boy and Girl Scout camps, private pools, fitness clubs, private golf courses, etc. Nor is HOA/COA "common area" included, as such lands are not a formal open space designation and may include facilities such as parking lots and structures and amenities available only to residents.

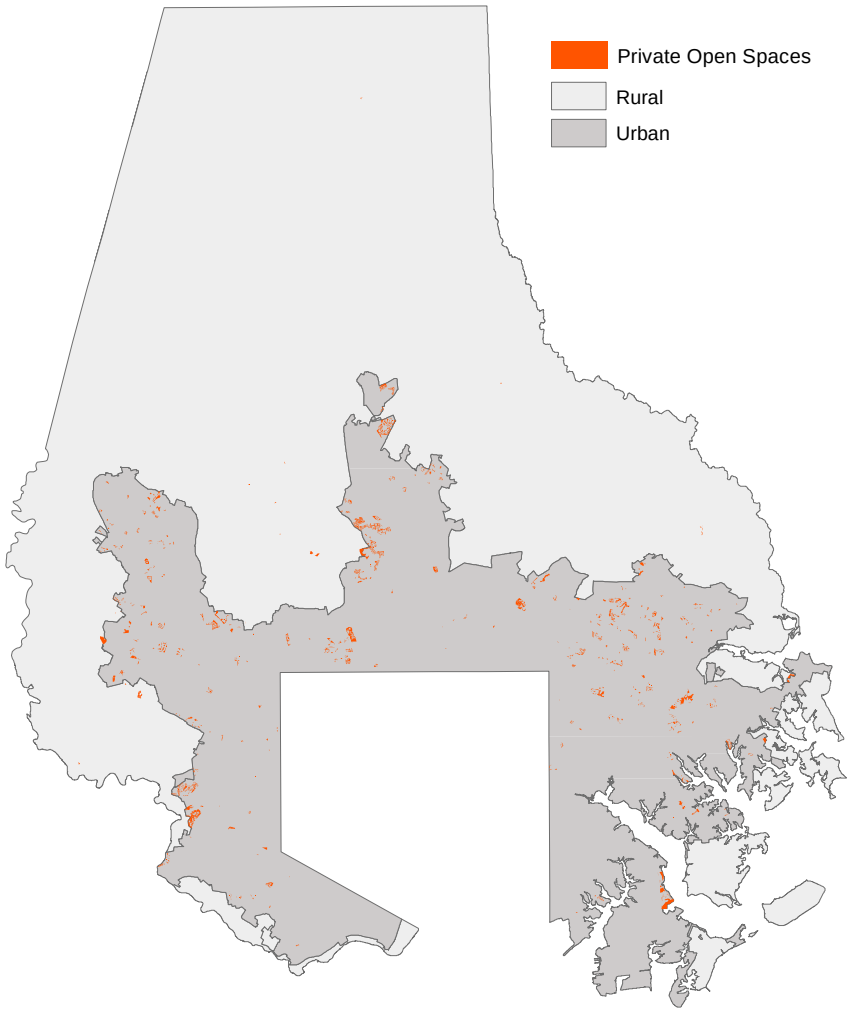


Figure 31. Private Open Space

2.4 Inventory Map

The next map shows all combined parklands identified in the preceding maps The term parklands refers to public and non-public lands where public access for recreational purposes is available. The map does not include agricultural land preservation easements or other lands preserved under easements and other mechanisms that preserve lands but do not provide some level of public access.

The map demonstrates the breadth and diversity of parklands available throughout Baltimore County, including County, State, and National parks, public school recreation centers, reservoir watershed properties, and numerous types of open space and green spaces. These lands combined comprise nearly 90 square miles, representing approximately 15% of the County's land area. A full listing of all sites is included within the plan appendix, with maps and park descriptions by RPD Group.

Table 4. Parkland Inventory Acreage Summary

Site Type	Acres	Square Miles	Percent of County Land
County Park	8,311	13.0	2.1%
School Recreation Center	3,721	5.8	1.0%
County Open Space	3,548	5.5	0.9%
Other County-Owned Green Spaces	2,365	3.7	0.6%
Reservoir	14,679	22.9	3.8%
State Parks	22,175	34.6	5.7%
National Parks	61	0.1	0.0%
Privately Owned Open Space	1,679	2.6	0.4%
Totals	56,539	88.3	15%

Preserved Land in Baltimore County

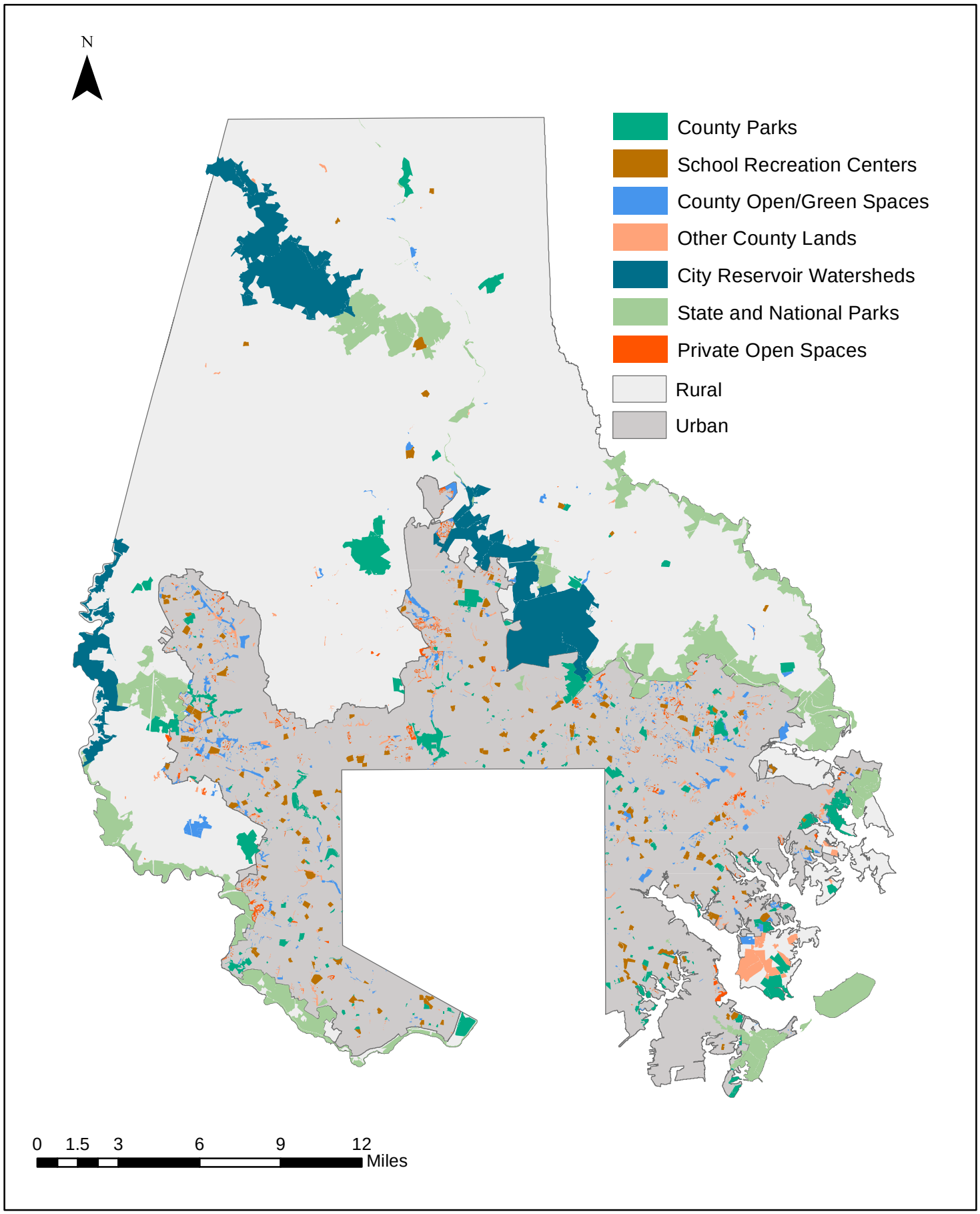


Figure 32. Preserved Land in Baltimore County

2.5 Preserved Natural Resource and Agricultural Lands

In addition to the land owned by local, state, and federal governments, there are areas of Baltimore County protected for natural resource and agricultural preservation through other means, including easements and zoning. Areas designated as Targeted Ecological Areas and Agricultural Priority Preservation areas have valued characteristics that make them high priorities for preservation. In addition, the URDL and Baltimore County Growth Tiers help to manage a balance of development and conservation. These policies help to enable growth, while maintaining both the agricultural heritage and natural beauty of our County. These protections are complementary to the parks and recreation system.

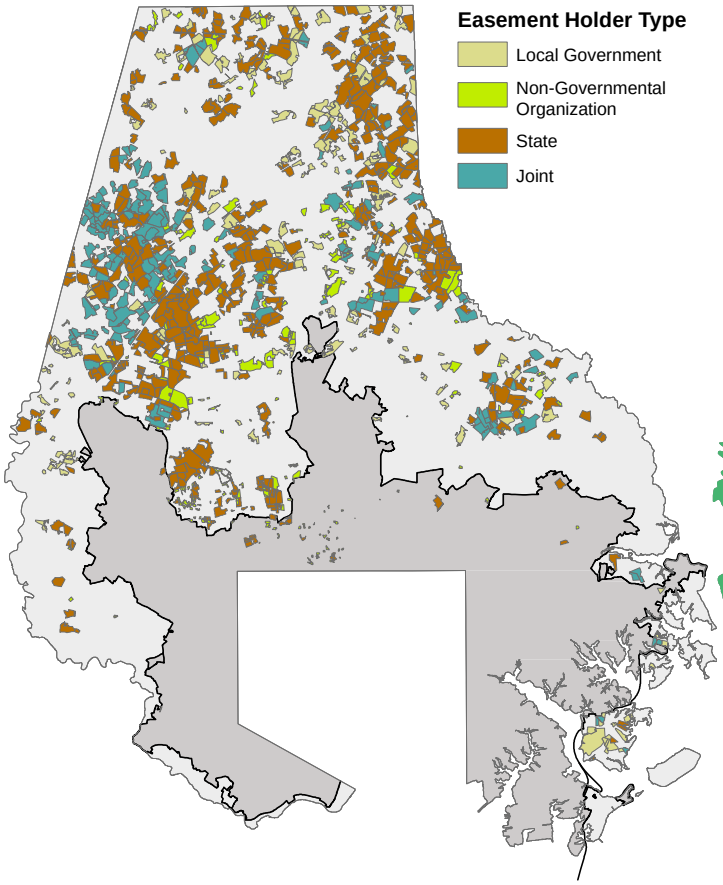


Figure 33. Baltimore County Conservation Easement Holders

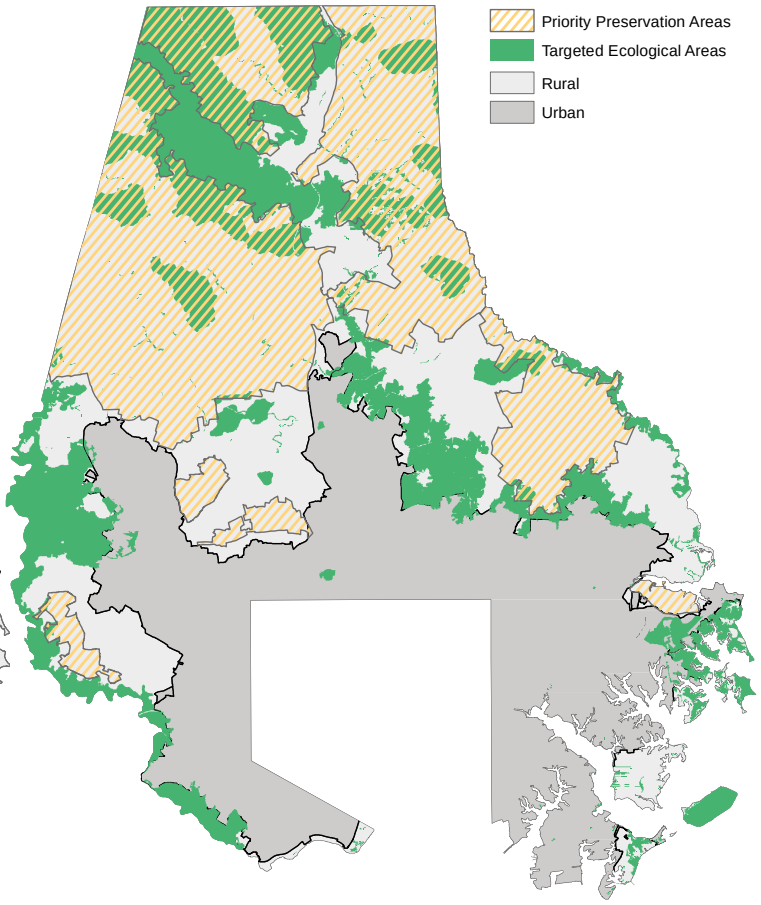


Figure 34.Targeted Ecological Areas and Priority Preservation Areas

Preserved Land in Baltimore County

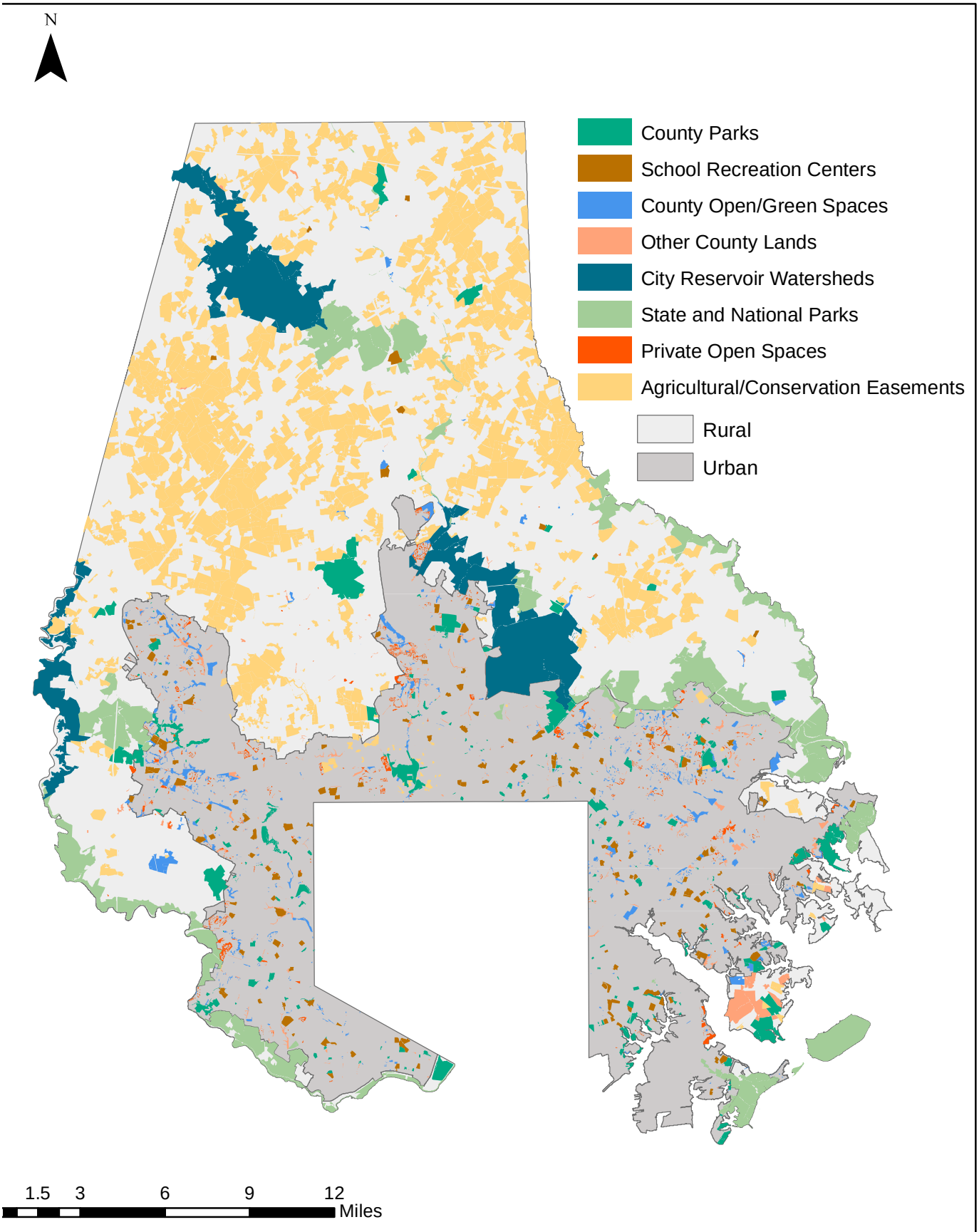


Figure 35. Preserved Land including Agricultural/Conservation Easements

CHAPTER THREE

MEASURING USER DEMAND



3.1 Introduction

When planning for the future of Recreation and Parks in Baltimore County, it is important to understand how residents are currently using parks and amenities and what their additional needs are. The DRP gathered feedback from the public in multiple ways to capture as much relevant information as possible. Below are the results of this information gathering process, which included interviews with recreation staff, examination of program participation records, comments from public meetings hosted by the DRP and the Baltimore County Department of Planning, and an online survey. This section provides a general summary of comments. Chapter 5, Goals and Objectives, details comments on specific parks in each RPD group.

3.2 Interviews with Recreation Staff

Some staff members of the Department of Recreation and Parks are directly involved in coordinating with Recreation Councils and running programs. Each recreation region has a regional coordinator and community supervisors. In addition, special sites like Nature Centers and PAL Centers have coordinators who oversee programming. All of these staff members have a deep knowledge of their communities' priorities and their region's facilities and capacities.

Regional coordinators, community supervisors and managers of special sites were contacted for short interviews. While each interview varied depending on the individual's role and location, the overarching goal of each interview was the same: to assess what programs and facilities were working well for the community and what improvements and capital investments were needed. Respondents were asked about their opinions from the field, as well as about what they had heard from members of the public.

Many of the recreation staff shared concerns about specific facilities, which are enumerated in Chapter 5. There were common themes throughout the interviews which have a more general application to our recreation and parks system, such as:

- There is a strong need for indoor recreation facilities in the county. Current plans for new facilities are welcome, though there are even more communities that need space. Existing facilities are also in need of maintenance and renovations to better provide programming.
- Recreation programs are increasingly incorporating technology, such as virtual reality, programming, and gaming. Future plans, particularly for indoor facilities, should have space for these kinds of activities.
- Performing arts is a growing segment of recreation programming, with several robust dance and music programs. There is a need for indoor rehearsal space and indoor and outdoor stages for performances.
- To improve programming for teens and adults, there is a need for full-sized gymnasiums and 90 foot diamonds. Many communities have gyms and ball diamonds, but they are too small to serve some residents' needs.
- Athletic fields with lights and turf are highly valued by communities because they make it possible to play after sunset and after rainstorms. Additional turf fields and lighting upgrades are desired.
- There are many places within the County's system that are not accessible. Renovations, new buildings, and other facilities like playgrounds should plan for people with mobility challenges, as well as those who are vision impaired.
- Diverse recreational facilities, such as skate parks, performing arts centers, community gardens, and pickleball are highly valued by communities.
- Many indoor and outdoor recreation facilities lack storage, which inhibits programming.
- There are many playgrounds and restroom facilities in need of replacement.

3.3 Program Participation

Much of the recreational programming in Baltimore County is carried out by volunteer Recreation Councils, who do not report their program participation rates to the County. The sports leagues, fitness classes, and other recreational programs run by each council are generally well attended and appreciated by community members. They vary widely across the county, depending on the capacity of the council, the facilities available, and the preferences of community members.

Some programs, including those held at PAL Centers and Nature Centers are carried out by staff of DRP, and have been tracked over the last two fiscal years. These years were heavily impacted by the pandemic, with programs shutting down in March of FY20 and gradually reopening throughout FY21. Despite this impact, there were 1,180 and 774 programs with over 110,000 and over 75,000 registrants in FY20 and FY21, respectively. We expect that programs and events will return to pre-pandemic levels in the following years.

Table 5. Programs and Registrants in FY20 and FY21

	July 2019 - June 2020	June 2020 - July 2021
Nature Programs	110	125
All Programs	1,180	774
Therapeutic Recreation Registrants	778	505
All Program Registrants	111,569	76,909
Special Events	110	41







3.4 Other Park Use

Casual park use, including walking, hiking, cycling, pickup sports games, playground use, and general enjoyment of parks for relaxation and leisure, is difficult to measure, especially in smaller neighborhood and community parks. There are typically no staff on site and park users may access the sites at any time from a variety of entrances. Park staff estimate that in FY21, there were about 10.9 M visits to our parks for non-programmed activities, including unscheduled play (8.5 M), outside group gatherings (about 5,500), and pavilion/picnic grove use (about 42,250). While these estimates are not exact, it is clear that there are many casual visits to Baltimore County parks for casual, non-programmed use.

In addition to this rough estimate, a survey conducted in 2021 asked residents about their typical park use. Many of the most common activities, including walking/hiking, picnicking, using a playground/tot lot, boating, and swimming at a beach, would be classified as unscheduld activities. The results of this survey are described further in section 3.6 under "Reported Use of Recreation and Park Sites."

3.5 Public Meetings and Written Input

LPPRP Public Meeting

A public meeting focused on the LPPRP was held on Thursday, November 18, 2021. An announcement of this meeting was sent to recreation council presidents, community association leaders, and members of the Baltimore County Council, who forwarded the message to interested parties. It was also added to the countywide listing of public meetings and advertised on the social media of Baltimore County and the DRP. Due to ongoing concerns from the coronavirus pandemic, this meeting was held virtually on Webex. There were 67 participants, who were able to speak to the group or submit comments by chat.



The most common theme for the comments was to have greater connectivity of trails, paths, and biking routes and to have them connect to public transportation routes. The LPPRP process is happening simultaneously with the Master Plan 2030 and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, both of which address pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure on parklands and non-parklands. Another broad theme was that parks in Baltimore County should be designed to serve people with a variety of ages, abilities, and interests in an equitable manner. Several residents also expressed concerns with specific parks, including issues with invasive species, poor maintenance, and poor access. Parks mentioned included Edmondson Heights Park, Golden Ring Park, and Villa Nova park. Residents advocated for more greenspace and recreation facilities, especially in Pikesville (West Central) and the 6th District (mostly East Central and East RPD groups). Residents also expressed a desire for additional facilities for pickleball and mountain biking.

Residents were invited at the meeting and on our website to submit comments by phone or email to DRP. Many of the comments received in this way reflected those expressed at the public meeting. Additionally, people wrote in supporting hunting in the County, improvements to open space regulations for developments, new indoor recreation centers, expanding environmental education, expanding programming for teens and adults, and further emphasizing the importance of equity and accessibility in parks and recreation.

Master Plan 2030 Meetings

Additional public comments were incorporated from the Master Plan 2030 (MP2030) planning process, which was happening concurrently. MP2030 includes components of recreation and parks, and so relevant citizen input was shared between the Baltimore County Department of Planning and DRP. In June, July, and August, the Department of Planning held public meetings and asked residents to respond to specific questions about the current strengths of Baltimore County and what they would like to see happen in the next ten years. The following is a summary of feedback on recreation, parks and open space at the countywide level from the MP2030 process.

- Residents greatly value open space and community parks. They would like for existing open space and parks to remain, and for additional properties to be converted to publicly accessible greenspace.
- Residents value both small community parks and larger, interconnected parks and open spaces.
- Residents value the strong Recreation Councils that offer programs for kids, adults, and seniors. Several people expressed a desire for increased activities for kids, teens, and seniors.
- There were some concerns about the pressure that new recreation facilities could put on communities, such as additional traffic, light pollution, and noise.

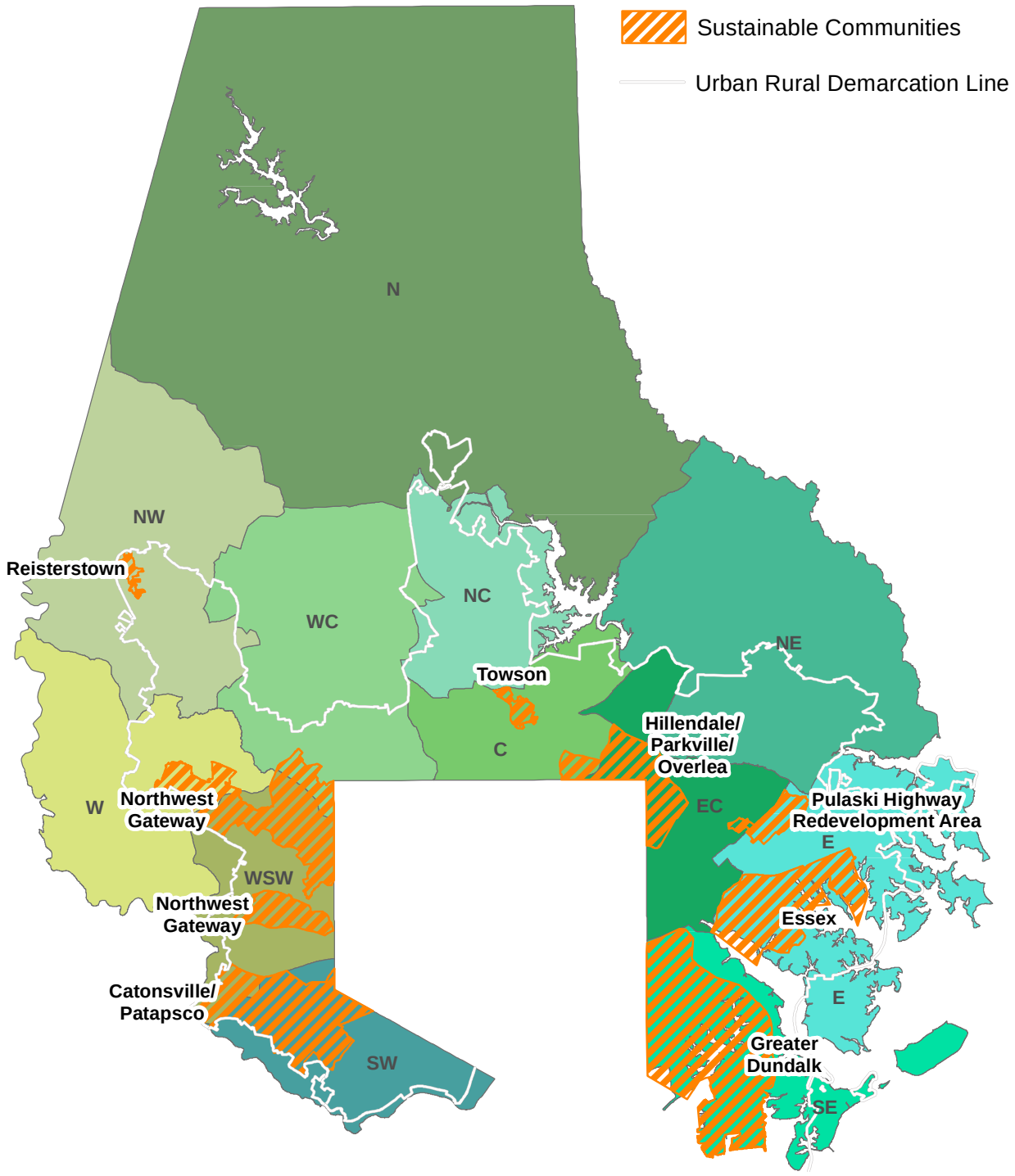
Overall, residents expressed a desire for more parks and open space in their communities. There were several comments that were specific to certain regions. Using the RPD group geography, people expressed that they would like to see the following in their communities:

- East: more small areas for recreation
- North: public parks and playing fields
- North Central: parks with walking trails
- Northwest: additional greenspace to accommodate future growth
- Southwest: improvements to existing parks and a community garden
- West: dog parks
- West Central: address the current lack of accessible green space
- West Southwest: parks with walkable connections



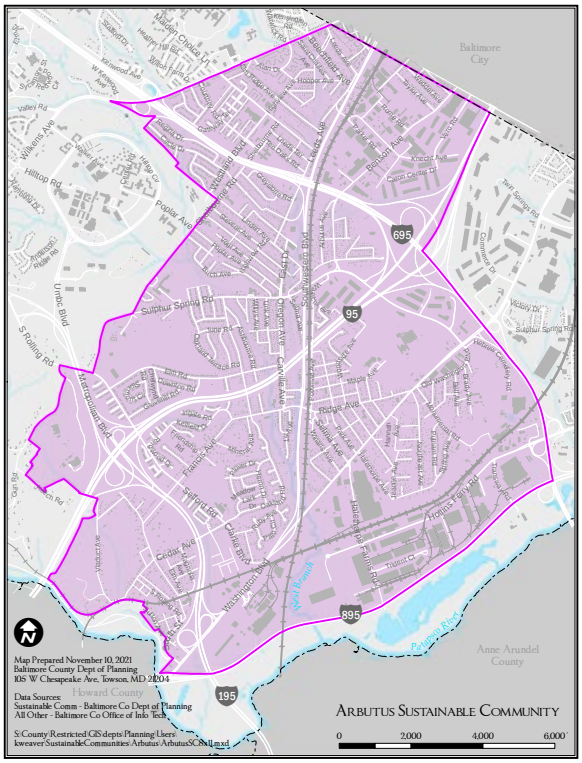
Sustainable Community Plans

In addition to the Master Plan, Baltimore County has areas that have adopted Sustainable Communities Plans. Currently, Baltimore County has nine approved Sustainable Community Plans for: Arbutus; Catonsville and Patapsco; Essex; Greater Dundalk and Sparrows Point; Hillendale, Parkville and Overlea; Northwest Gateways; Pulaski Highway Redevelopment Area; Reisterstown Main Street; and Towson. All of these communities are within the Urban Rural Demarcation Line.



The 2010 Sustainable Communities Act defines Sustainable Community Areas as places where public and private investments and partnerships achieve:

- Development of a healthy local economy
- Protection and appreciation of historical and cultural resources
- A mix of land uses
- Affordable and sustainable housing, and employment options
- Growth and development practices that protect the environment and conserve air, water and energy resources, and encourage walkability and recreational opportunities
- Creation of access to transit where available



Each plan must address environmental topics, which may include

> **"quality of land, water, air or watersheds, increased tree canopy, mitigation or adaptation to issues related to sea level rise, reduction of carbon footprint, improved energy conservation, access to local foods, green infrastructure, stormwater infrastructure or management, construction of parks, trails and other recreation facilities, recycling, improved water and sewer capacity, etc."**

Several of these subjects are directly relevant to land preservation, parks, and recreation and therefore it is helpful to examine the recommendations of the Sustainable Community Plans.

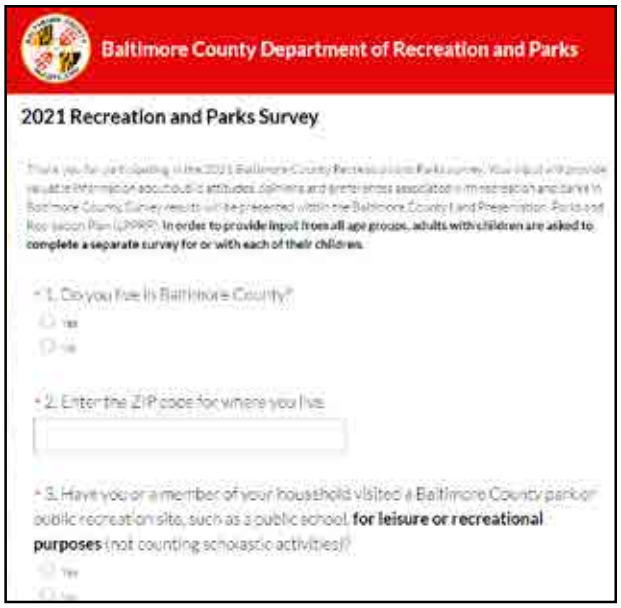


Each plan addresses the need for additional tree cover. Parks and other preserved lands play a part in this effort in Baltimore County by preserving forested areas and acquiring land that may be planted with additional trees. Other action items relevant to DRP include:

- Creating community gardens
- Adding pollinator gardens
- Using greenspace for outdoor arts activities
- Expanding youth recreation programming
- Creating pedestrian and bike connections through parks
- Providing additional benches, tables, grills, and signage at parks
- Acquiring additional park sites and enhancing existing parks

3.6 Online Survey

To understand Baltimore County residents' current park uses and recreational needs, the Department of Recreation and Parks conducted an online survey. This survey was posted in English and Spanish to Baltimore County's homepage, the DRP's homepage, the MP2030 webpage and shared through social media. It was also disseminated by email to recreation councils and community groups. Fliers with a QR code and link were placed in recreation centers. The survey received nearly 2,500 responses. It was open to responses from October 4 to December 1, 2021. This was not a statistically valid survey and there was no mechanism to prevent multiple submissions from a single person. Nevertheless, it was a useful method and many of the results of the survey reinforce the conclusions of other forms of analysis for the LPPRP.



To enable comparisons between years, the survey conducted in 2021 was nearly identical to the survey conducted in 2016. Due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, any reference to "in the last 12 months" was changed to "in an average year." Pickleball, spraygrounds/splashpads, and disc golf, which have risen in popularity over the last five years, were added as options for multiple questions, and there were additional opportunities for free responses.

Respondents were asked for their zip codes, which were used to map responses. The table below shows the groupings used for survey responses based on how well the RPD group aligns with each zip code.

Table 6. Regional Planning District Groups' associated zip codes

RPD Group	Zip Codes
Central	21204, 21210, 21212, 21239, 21286
East	21220, 21221
East Central	21206, 21234, 21237
North	21053, 21074, 21102, 21111, 21120, 21131, 21152, 21155, 21161
North Central	21030, 21031, 21093
Northeast	21013, 21051, 21057, 21082, 21085, 21087, 21128, 21156, 21162, 21236
Northwest	21117, 21136
Southeast	21052, 21219, 21222, 21224
Southwest	21225, 21227, 21228, 21229, 21230
West	21104, 21133, 21163
West Central	21208, 21209, 21215
West Southwest	21043, 21207, 21244

Survey Response Rates

There were 2,497 survey responses, including 2,249 responses from Baltimore County residents. This was a 165% increase from the survey conducted in 2016. Despite the great overall response rate, the distribution of survey participants is uneven, from just 26 responses in the West RPD Group to 384 in the North Central RPD Group.

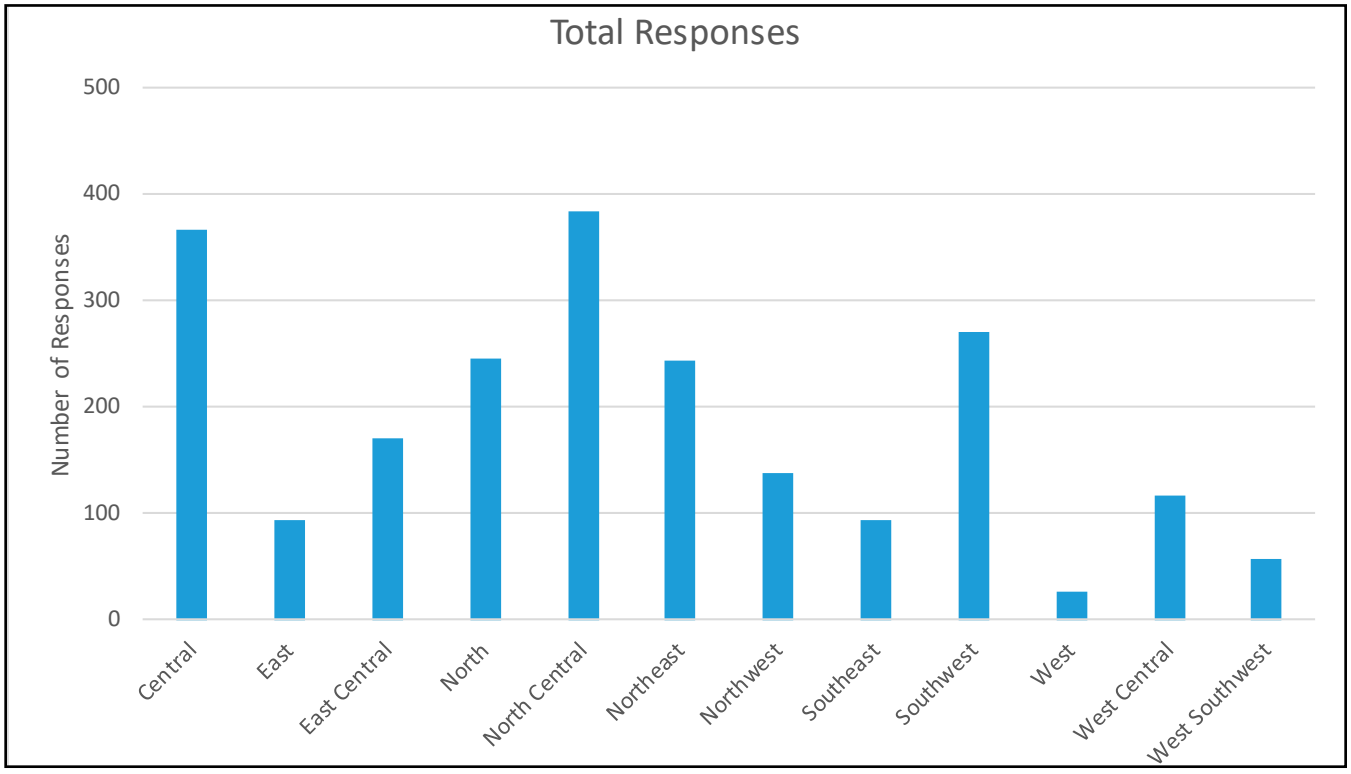


Figure 36. Survey Responses by RPD Group

When accounting for population in each RPD group, there are still wide divisions in response rate. The North Central, North, and Central RPD Groups were best represented with approximately 71, 63, and 48 survey responses per 10,000 residents, respectively. The West, West Southwest, and East, were the least represented, with approximately 10 or fewer responses per 10,000 residents, respectively. These areas may require more targeted outreach to understand community needs. The following chapter will show that these are areas of low park equity, making greater outreach especially important.

Survey Response Rate

(responses per 10,000 Residents)

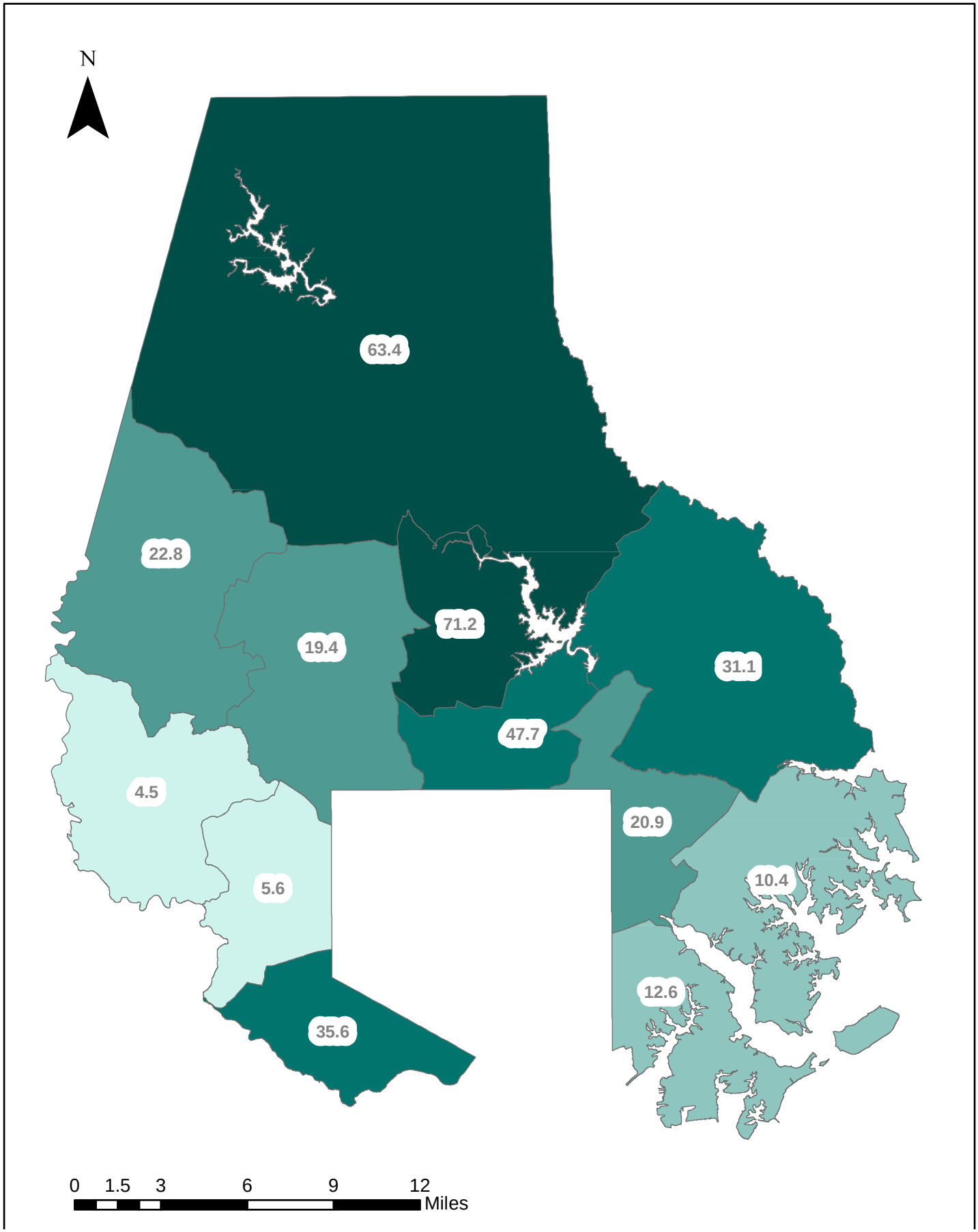


Figure 37. Survey Response Rate per 10,000 Residents

As shown above, the survey failed to capture input from all regions of the county. In addition, the race of survey respondents does not reflect the race of all county residents. Of the 2,500 survey respondents, 2,075 self-identified their race. The options reflected options given on the 2019 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census.

Compared to the actual racial composition of Baltimore County, respondents who identified as White were overrepresented (86.7% of respondents versus 60.2% of county residents). Black or African American residents were significantly underrepresented (6.3% of survey respondents versus 30.3% of county residents), as were Asian residents, to a lesser degree (1.7% of survey respondents versus 6.3% of county residents). Respondents who identified as "Other," "American Indian or Alaska Native," or "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander" responded at rates roughly equivalent to the actual County composition.

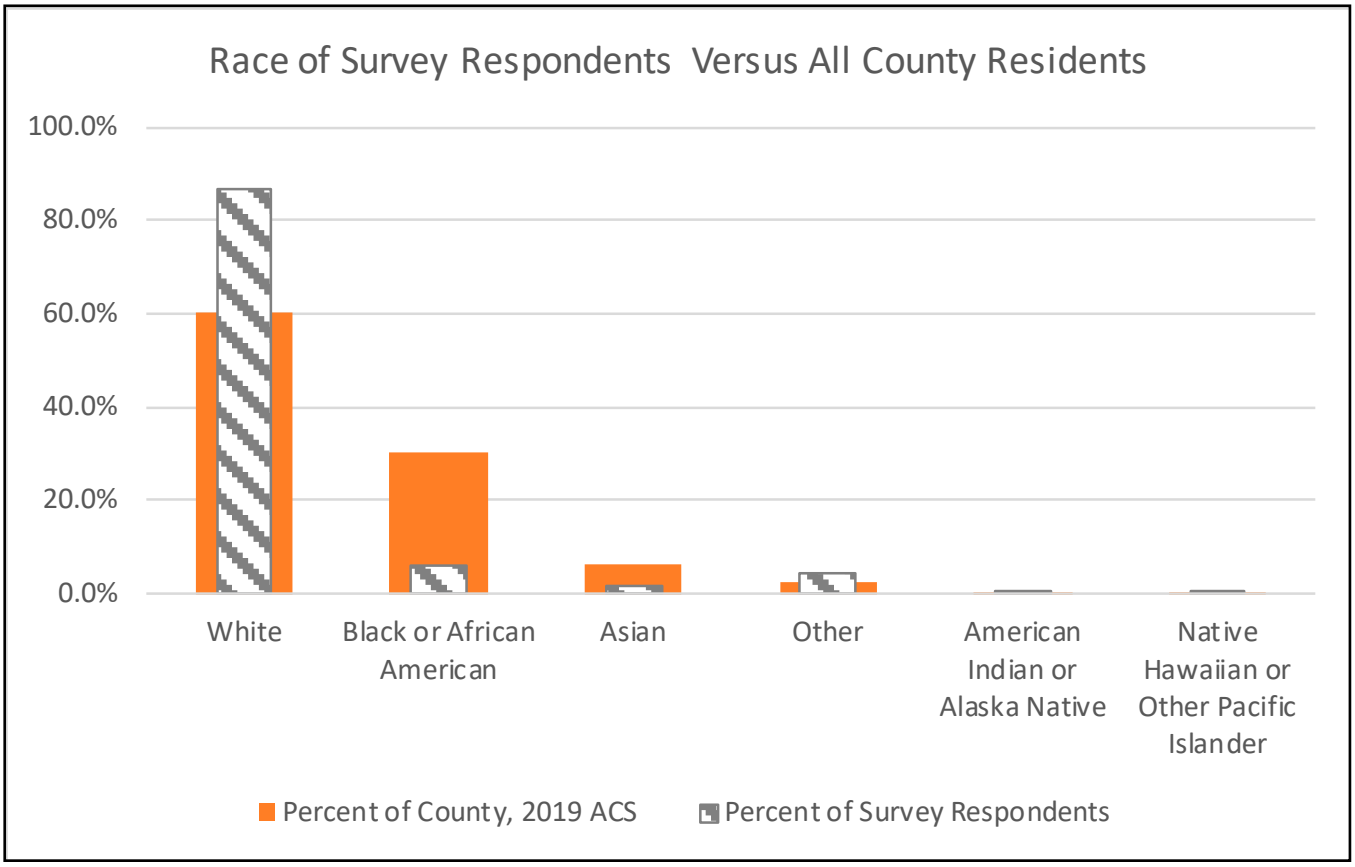


Figure 38. Race of Survey respondents Versus All County Residents

It is clear that the results of our survey do not fully represent all residents, as certain geographic and demographic segments of Baltimore County's population are underrepresented, while others are overrepresented. These imbalances make it clear that more targeted outreach is needed and that the survey results presented below must be taken with a grain of salt. They represent the views of many, but not all, County residents.

Reported Use of Recreation and Park Sites

Of residents who responded to the survey, 98.4% responded that they had visited a Baltimore County park or public recreation site for leisure or recreation purposes. Respondents were then asked which activities they have participated in while visiting a park or recreation site, with the following options:

- Attended a special event such as a concert, festival or fireworks display
- Participated in an organized program that took place on a single day or session
- Participated in an organized multi-day youth (under 18) program that took place indoors
- Participated in an organized multi-day adult (18 and over) program that took place indoors
- Participated in an organized multi-day youth (under 18) program that took place outdoors
- Participated in an organized multi-day adult (18 and over) program that took place outdoors
- Visited a nature or interpretive center at Oregon Ridge, Marshy Point, Cromwell Valley, the Agricultural Resource Center and Farm Park or Banneker Historical Park
- Visited a waterfront park
- Reserved and used a picnic pavilion or group picnic area
- Participated in an unscheduled activity such as walking, cycling, using a playground or shooting hoops
- Volunteered for a recreation program or event
- Other (please specify)

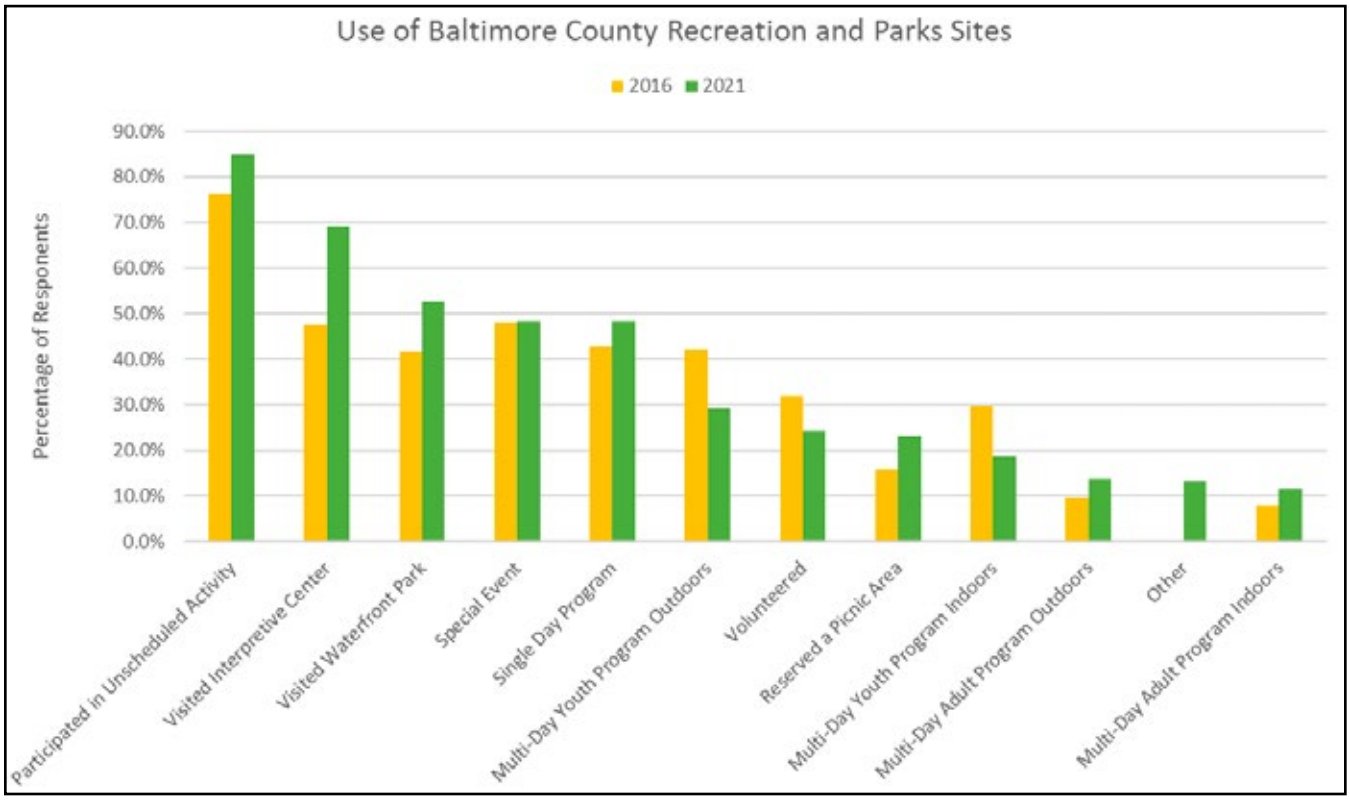


Figure 39. Use of Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Sites, 2016 and 2021

As in 2016, the most common use was for unscheduled activities (84.9%). This was followed by visiting an interpretive center (69.2%) and visiting a waterfront park (52.8%). Multi-day program participation for youth was down from 2016 for both indoor and outdoor activities, due partially to coronavirus restrictions and the broader reach of our 2021 survey.

It is notable, but not surprising, that unscheduled activity remained the most common use for both years. This is the most difficult number to verify using methods other than residents' self-reporting. Several respondents selected "other" and shared specific activities, many of which could be categorized as unscheduled activities. These include:

- Drove around and parked to relax
- Played tennis
- Hiking, nature photography
- Mountain biked
- Exercise
- Used picnic tables
- Organized dance recital
- Played on the playgrounds
- Just to sit and relax outdoors
- Lots of dog walks and bike rides
- Played pickleball with a group
- Played disc golf
- Our scout troop uses county parks frequently
- Model rocket launch

The survey also asked residents about their recreational activities and where they did those activities. The figure below shows the activities that respondents reported most frequently participating in using public parks, recreation centers or public schools. Walking/hiking, picnicking (both within and outside pavilions), using playgrounds, and boating with a canoe/kayak/rowboat were some of the most common answers. All are typically individual, non-organized activities, reflecting the responses to the question above.

Outdoor soccer was the most popular organized sport typically played at public facilities, followed by pickleball and baseball. Indoor versions of sports tended to be much less than common than outdoor versions, which is consistent with the number of facilities that Baltimore County has. While some activities, particularly organized programs like visual and performing arts, yoga, and gymnastics, received only a few responses, there were no activity options that received zero responses from residents.

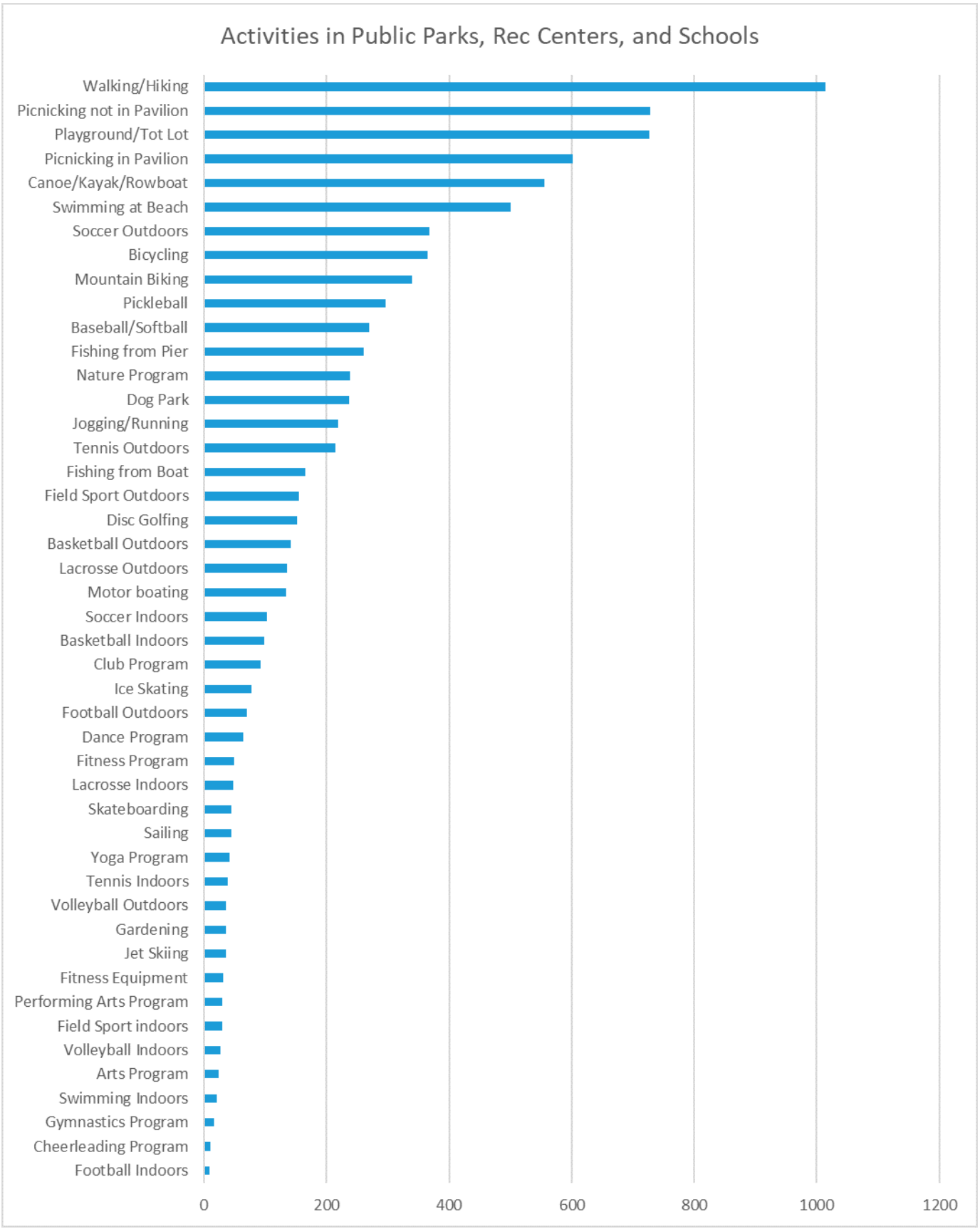


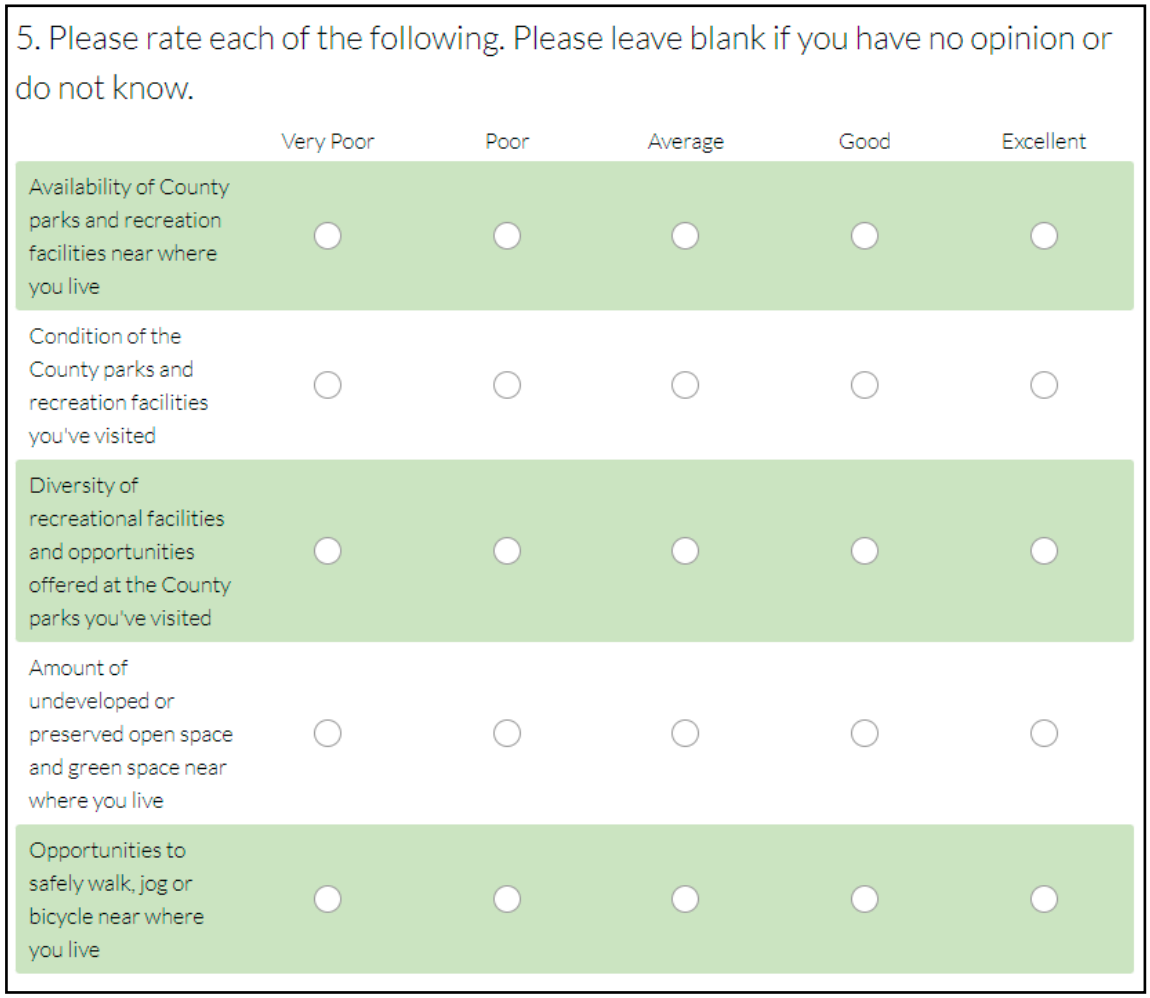
Figure 40. Activities in Public Parks, Rec Centers, and Schools

Ratings of Recreation and Park Assets

Survey participants were asked to rate aspects of Baltimore County's recreation and parks assets on a scale from Very Poor (1) to Excellent (5). The categories were:

- Availability of County parks and recreation facilities near where you live
- Condition of the County parks and recreation facilities you've visited
- Diversity of recreational facilities and opportunities offered at the County parks you've visited
- Amount of undeveloped or preserved open space and green space near where you live
- Opportunities to safely walk, jog or bicycle near where you live

The following section shows residents' average ratings for each category on a scale out of 5. There is also a comparison between ratings given in the 2016 survey and the 2021 survey. When examining these comparisons, it is important to note the vast differences in survey responses between the two surveys. While differences in ratings may reflect a real change in opinion, they may also reflect the fact that more people, with a wider range of opinions, influenced the ratings in the more recent survey.



Ratings of Parks and Recreation Availability

The Northeast RPD group registered the highest rating for parks and recreation availability, with an average rating of 4.0 and the West Central had the lowest rating, at 3.1 out of 5. As will be shown in the Level of Service analysis, the West Central RPD group has the least amount of local parklands, tennis courts, multipurpose courts, ball diamonds, and indoor recreation facilities for its population. The actual provision of parks and recreation aligns with the residents' perceptions and demonstrates a need for additional facilities. The ratings in 2016 and 2021 were relatively similar, with the North RPD group seeing the biggest change, from 2.4 to 3.5. The countywide average was 3.40 in 2016 and 3.50 in 2021.

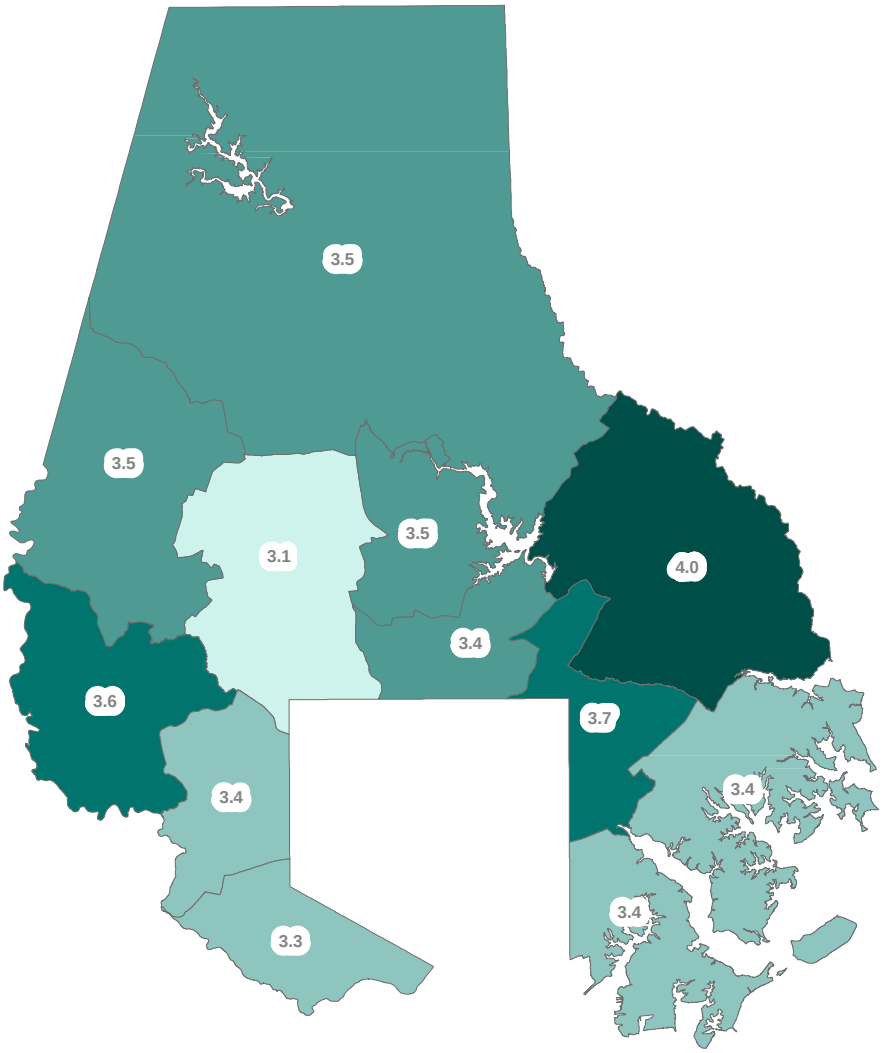


Figure 41. Ratings of Parks and Recreation Availability by RPD Group

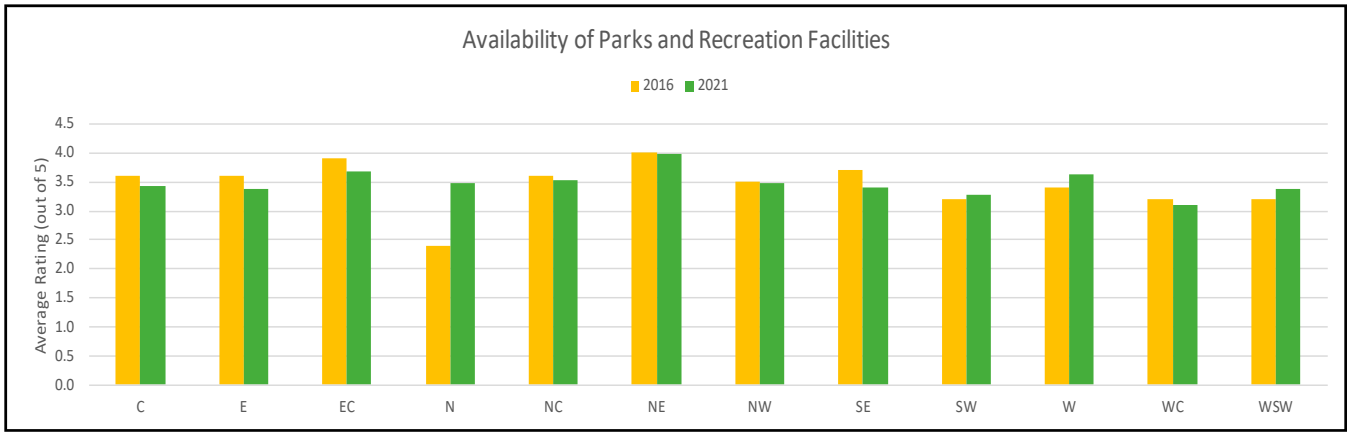


Figure 42. Ratings of Parks and Recreation Availability, 2016 and 2021

Ratings of Parks and Recreation Facilities' Condition

The West and Northeast RPD groups rated the condition of their parks and recreation facilities the highest, at 3.8 The Southeast had the lowest rating, at 3.1, which was down from the 2016 rating of 3.4. The Southwest and West Southwest had the next lowest ratings, both at 3.3. Compared with 2016, the results were relatively similar. More RPD Groups saw increases than decreases in their ratings since 2016. The countywide average was 3.45 in 2016 and 3.53 in 2021.

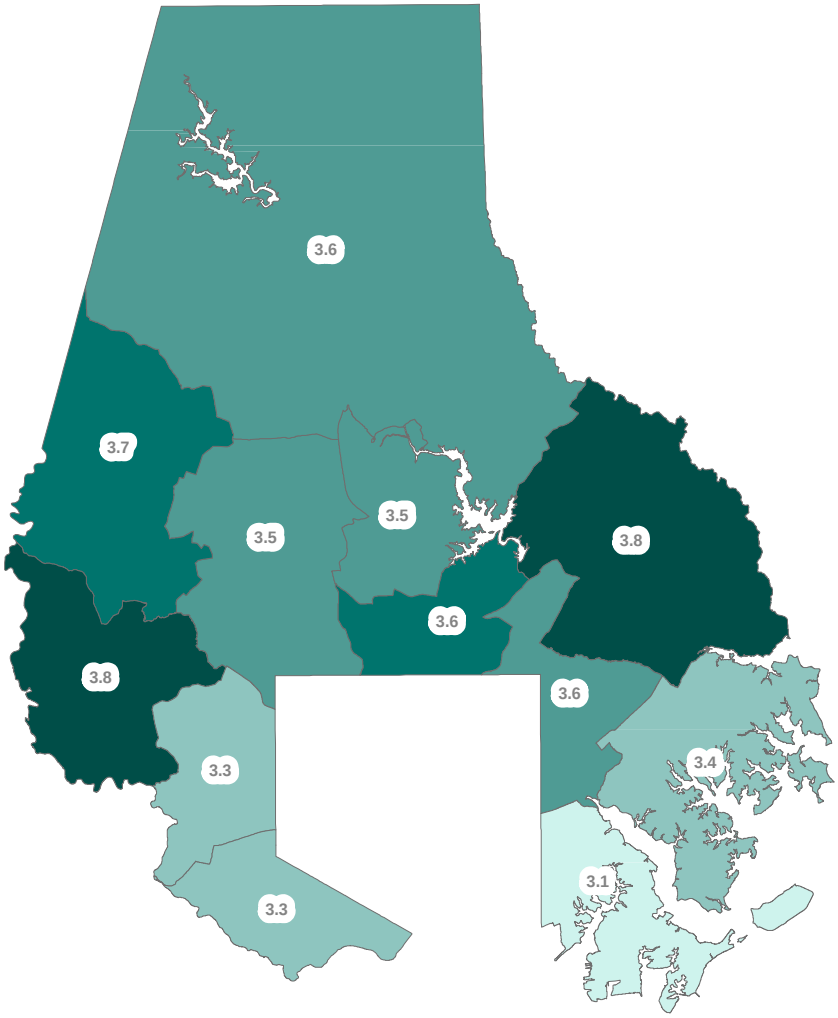


Figure 43. Ratings of Parks and Recreation Facilities Condition by RPD Group

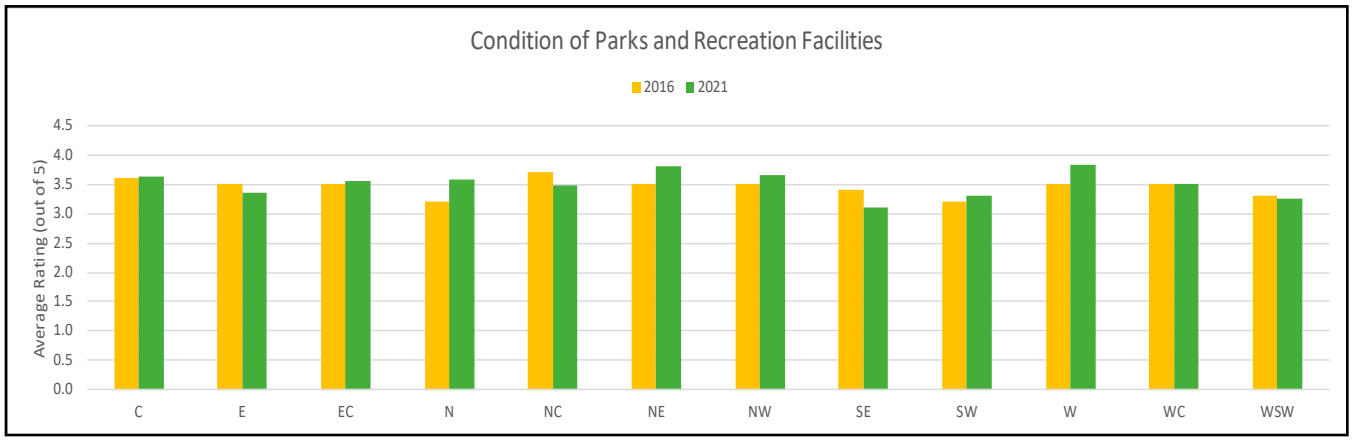


Figure 44. Ratings of Parks and Recreation Facilities Condition, 2016 and 2021

Ratings of Recreation Facility and Opportunity Diversity

This question aimed to understand resident's ratings of the diversity of recreation facilities and opportunities. A good diversity would likely include access to non-organized recreation like walking and biking, as well as playing fields or gyms for sports and possibly more unique recreational features like skate parks, community gardens, or boat launches. The Northeast RPD group again had the highest rating for recreational diversity, at 3.5. The West Southwest rated its recreational diversity lowest, at 2.8. This was followed by the Southwest and West Central, each with a rating of 3.0. These results were similar to the results of the 2016 survey, with the North RPD group seeing the biggest positive change. The countywide average rating was 3.25 in both 2016 and 2021.

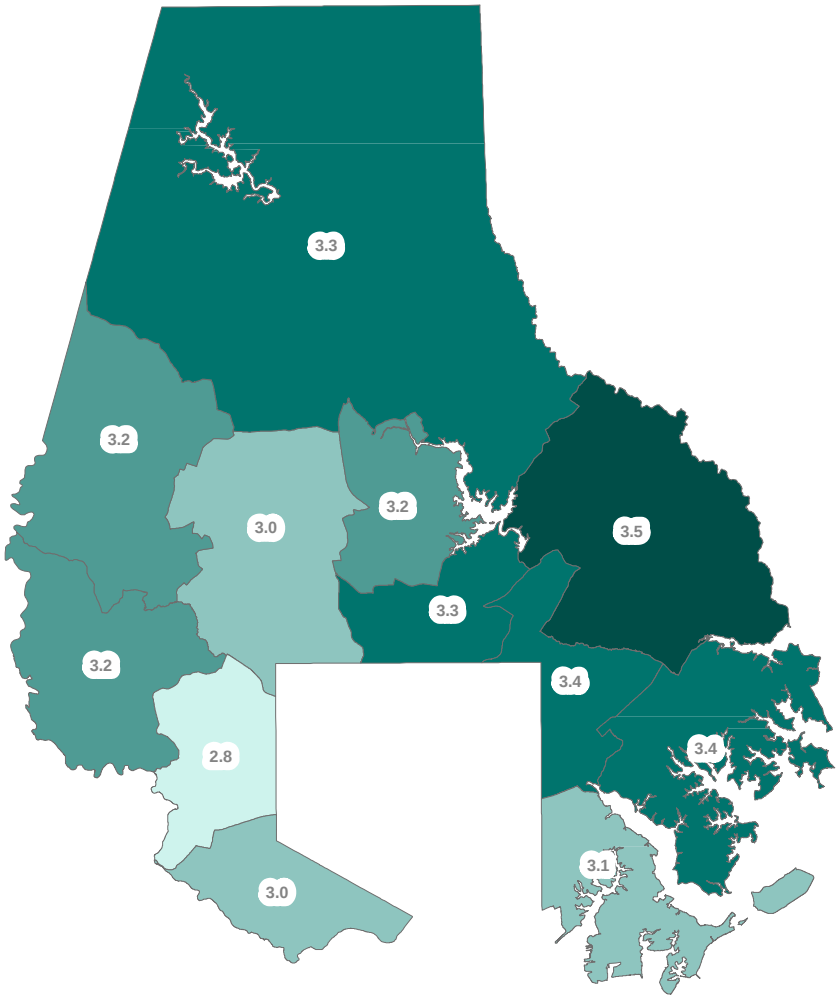


Figure 45. Ratings of Recreation Facility and Opportunity Diversity by RPD Group

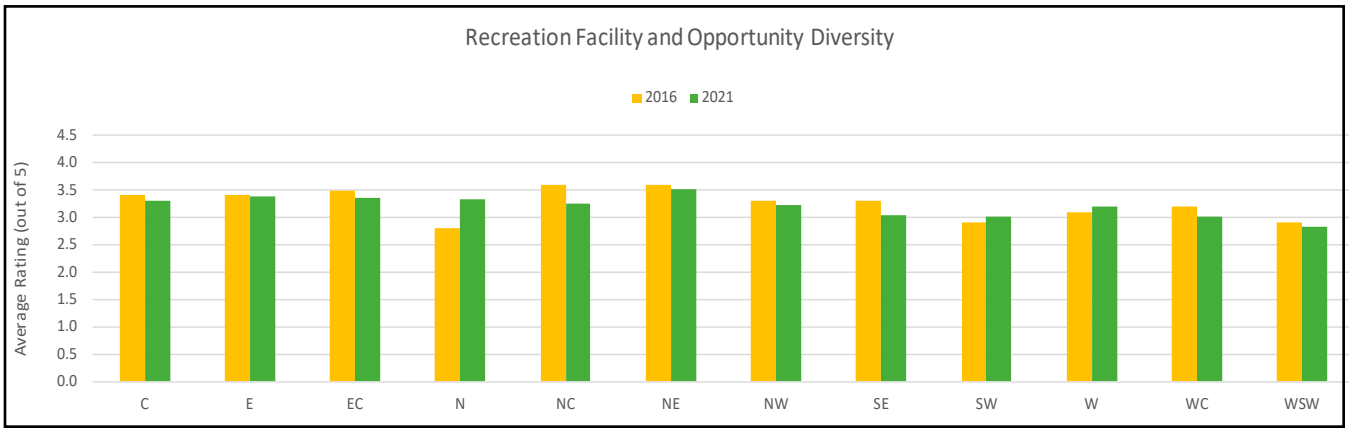


Figure 46. Ratings of Recreation Facility and Opportunity Diversity, **2016 and 2021**

Ratings of Amount of Undeveloped Open Space

Unsurprisingly, the North RPD group, which likes nearly entirely in the rural area of the county, received the highest rating for the amount of undeveloped open space at 3.8. Likewise, the Northeast and West, which are farther from Baltimore City, received the 2nd and 3rd highest ratings, both of 3.6. The West Southwest and Central RPD groups, both of which are densely populated, received scores below 3.0. These results are consistent with those of 2016, when the North had the highest rating and the Central and West Southwest received the two lowest scores. The countywide average was 3.20 in 2016 and 3.21 in 2021.

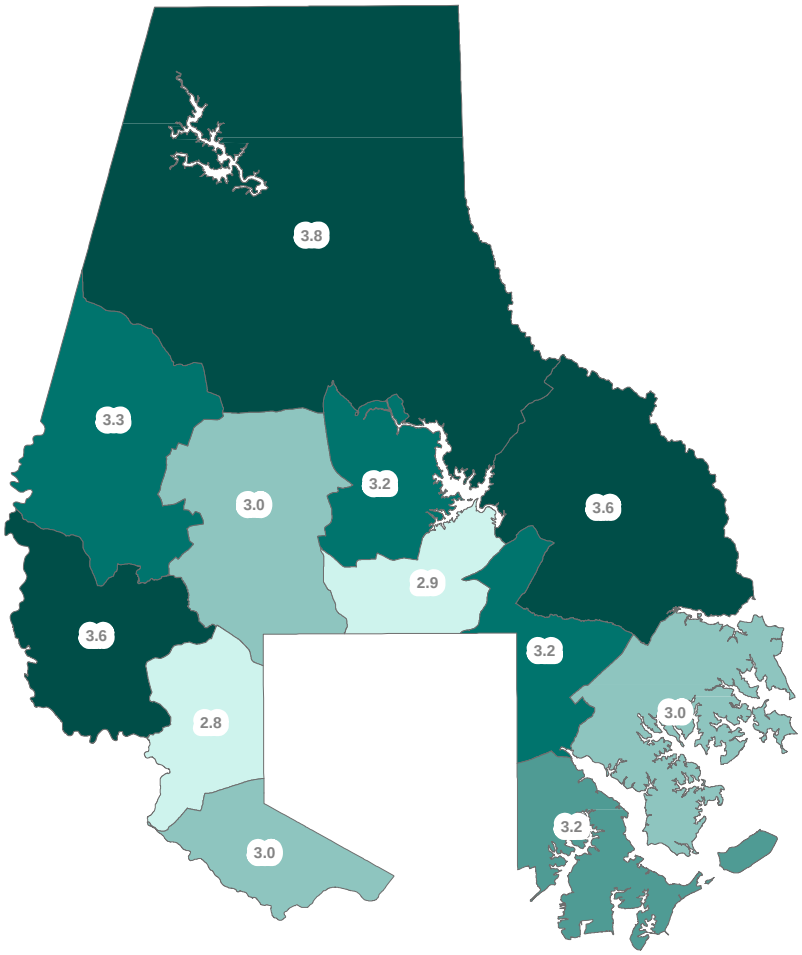


Figure 47. Ratings of Amount of Undeveloped Open Space by RPD Group

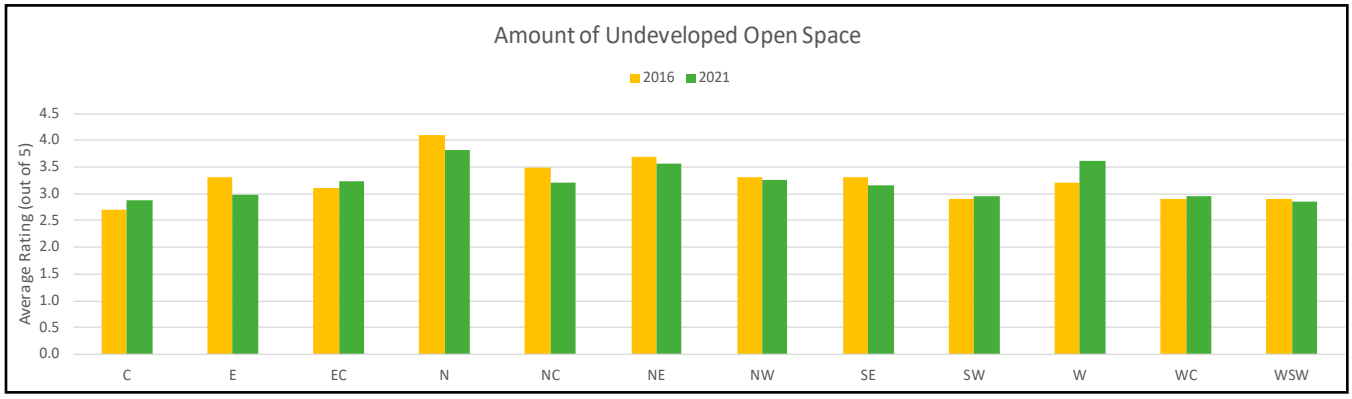


Figure 48. Ratings of Amount of Undeveloped Open Space, 2016 and 2021

Ratings of Places to Walk/Jog/Bike

The North, North Central, and Northeast RPD Groups received the top three ratings for places to walk, jog, and bike. The West Southwest and Southeast, both of which received the lowest ratings in other categories, received the lowest rating for this question. This question received the lowest overall rating in both 2016 and 2021, with ratings of 3.00 and 3.08, respectively. The following section focused on amenities that residents desire in greater quantities reflects this result, with many residents interested in walking and biking paths.

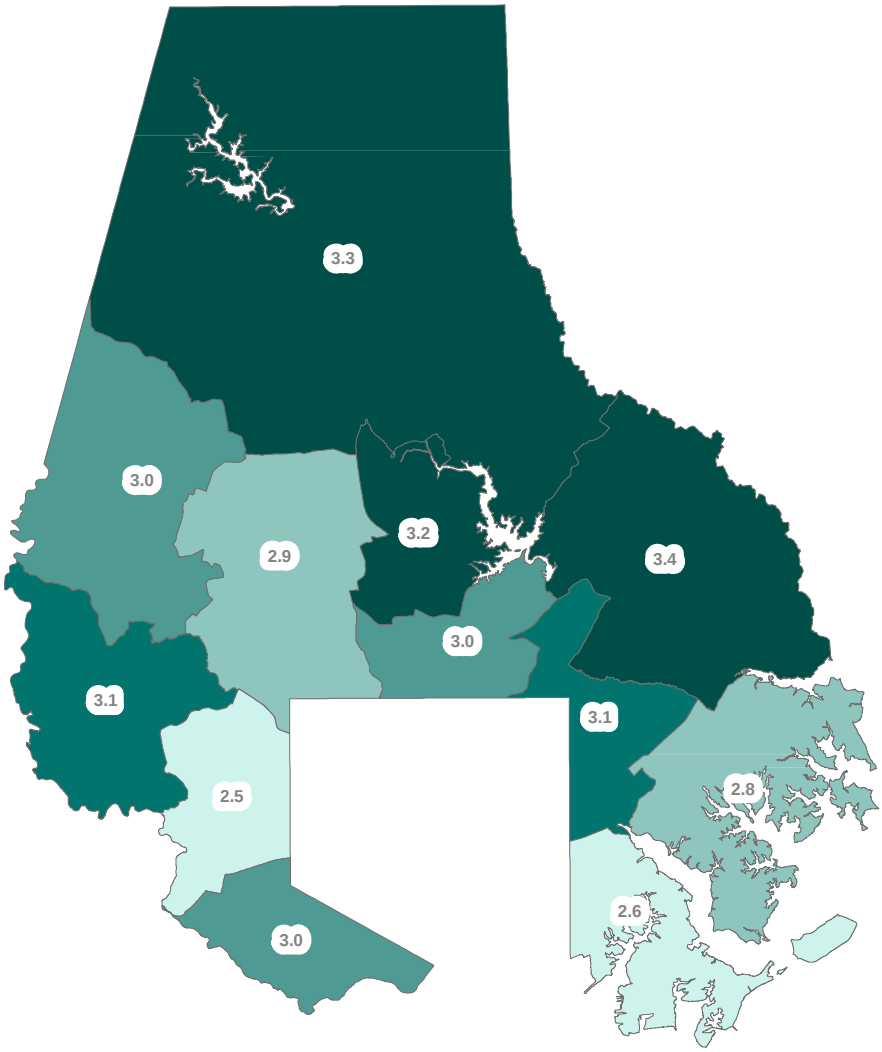


Figure 49. Ratings of Places to Walk/Jog/Bike by RPD Group

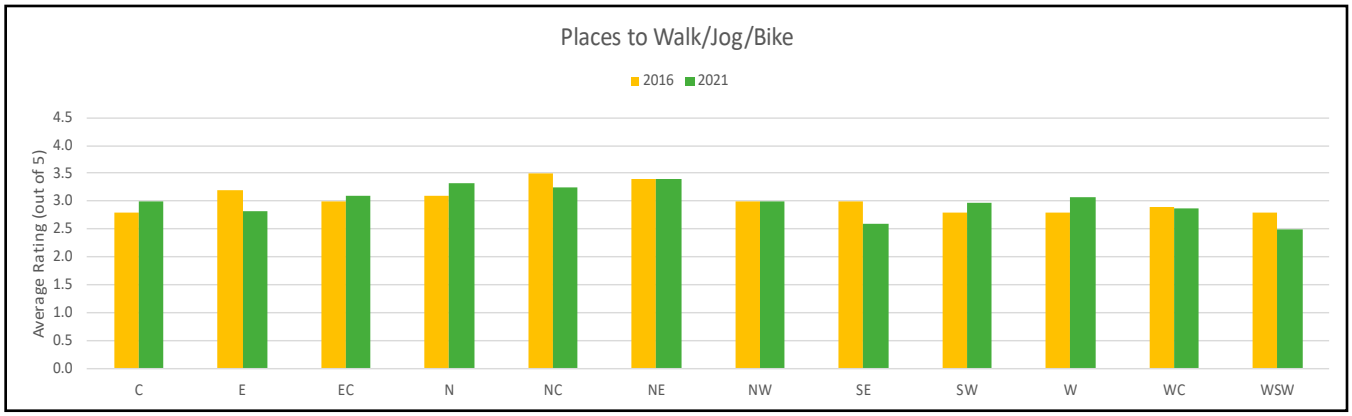


Figure 50. Ratings of Places to Walk/Jog/Bike, 2016 and 2021

Amenities Desired in Greater Quantity

Survey respondents were instructed, "Choose up to five types of public parks or recreational facilities that you'd like to have provided at a level greater than is presently available. If you believe that none are needed, please select "none" at the end of the list of facilities." The figures below show the percent of responses for each possible selection in 2016 and 2021. Pickleball Courts, Spraygrounds/Splashpads, and Disc Golf Courses were options only in 2021. They are presented in order from greatest to least percentage, based on 2021 responses.

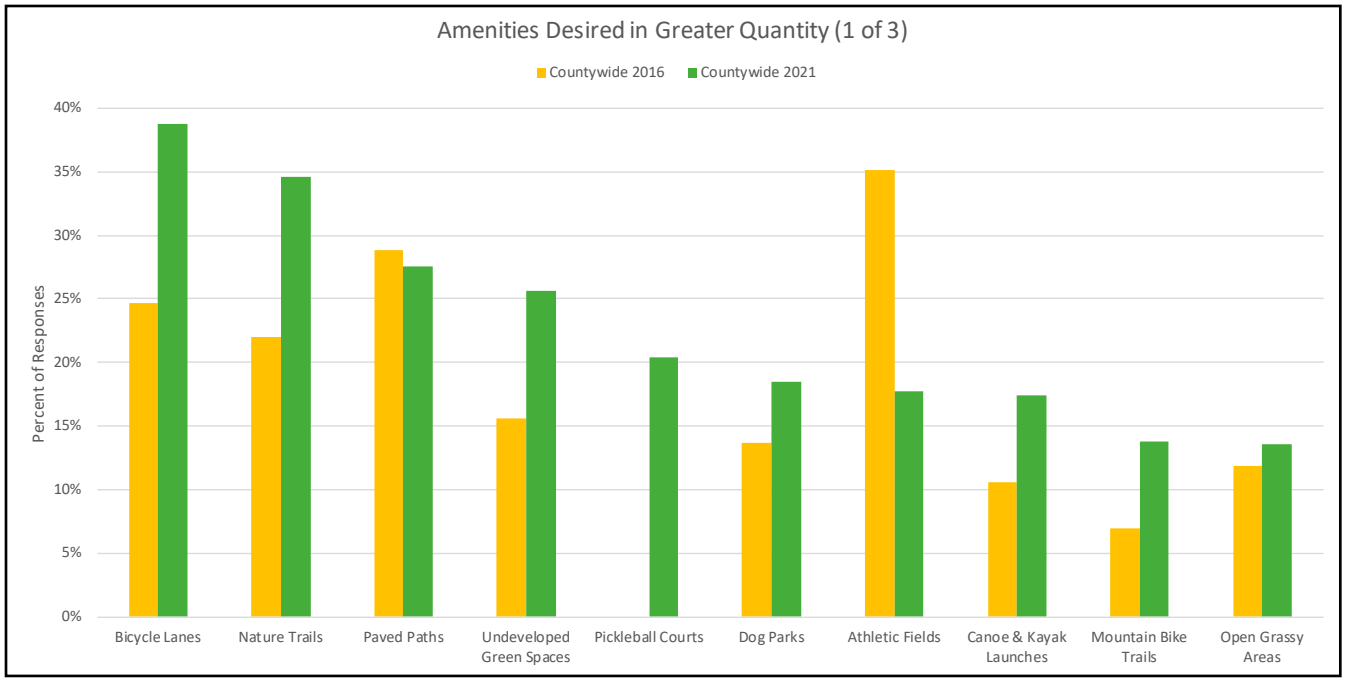


Figure 51. Top 10 Amenities Desired in Greater Quantity, 2016 and 2021

The top four responses - bicycle lanes, nature trails, paved paths, and undeveloped greenspaces - are all amenities for non-organized forms of recreation and all except paved paths are desired more greatly than they were in 2016. Another four of the top ten responses - dog parks, canoe and kayak launches, mountain bike trails, and open grassy areas - are for non-organized recreational activities. While the demand for athletic fields remains in the top 10 most requested items, the demand was nearly cut in half form the 2016 survey - from 35% to just 18% in 2021. This may reflect the construction of additional athletic fields in the last five years, as well as changing trends in recreation, partially impacted by the pandemic and a shift from organized sports to individual recreation.

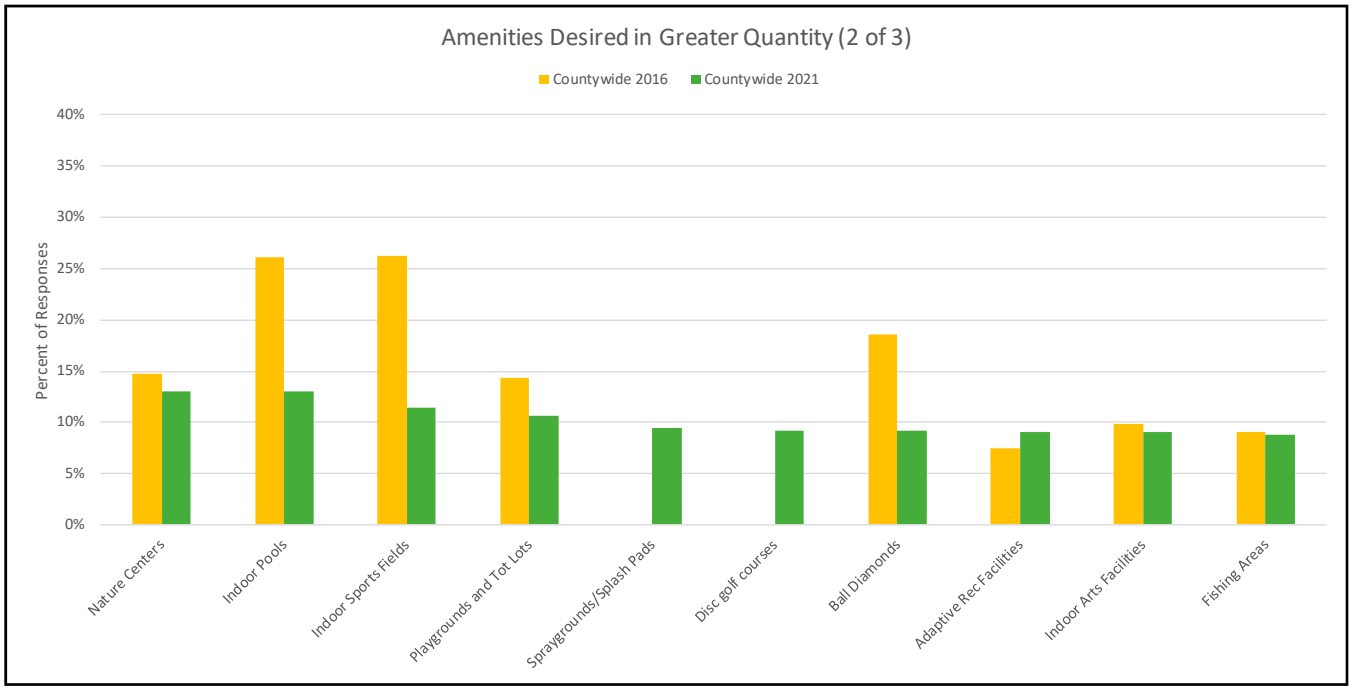


Figure 52. Middle 10 Amenities Desired in Greater Quantity, 2016 and 2021

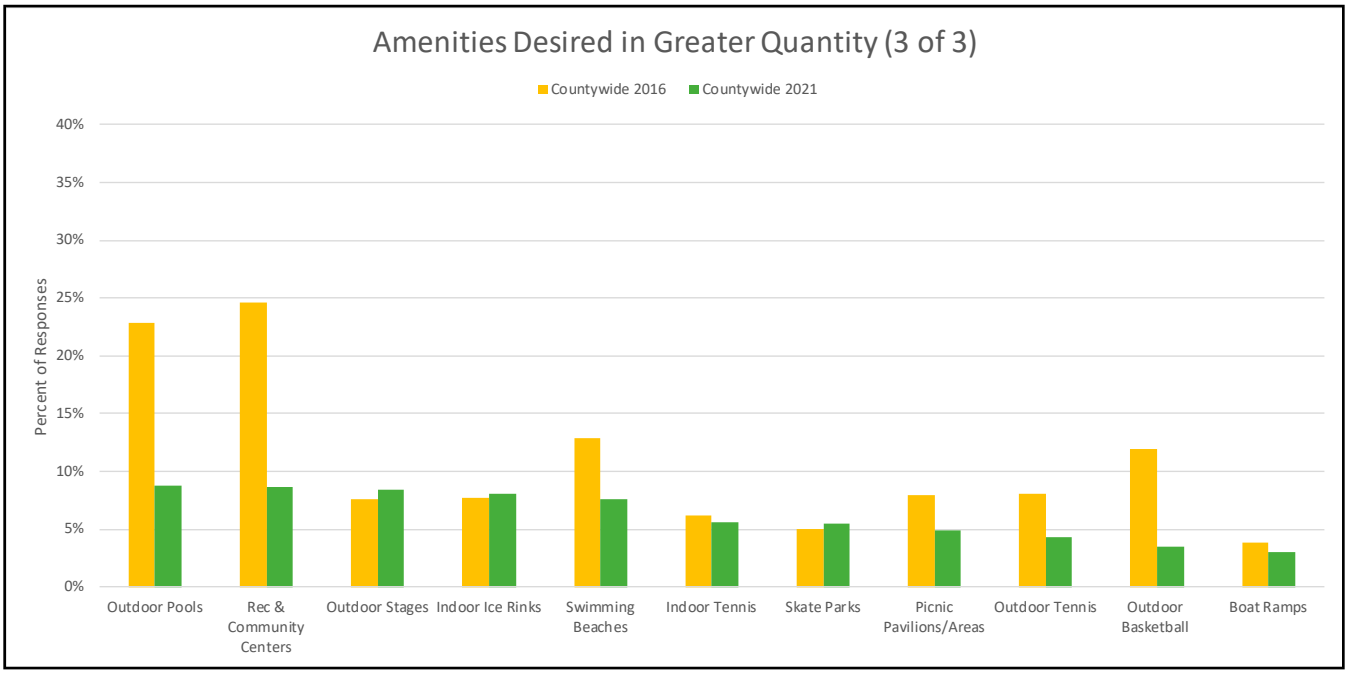


Figure 53. Bottom 11 Amenities Desired in Greater Quantity, 2016 and 2021

Seventeen amenities were selected by less than 10% of respondents. Spraygrounds/splashpads and disc golf courses, both new options for this survey, registered 9.3% and 9.4% of responses, respectively, indicating that these relatively new recreational amenities are already desired by many residents. Ball diamonds, outdoor pools, and recreation and community centers area all down from the 2016 survey, further demonstrating a shift in demand away from organized sports.

This question also had a free response option for indicating desired amenities beyond those listed. Multiple respondents indicated a desire for hunting areas and shooting/archery ranges (6), historical and agricultural centers (5), community gardens (4), additional parking (3), performing arts facilities (3), model rocket and drone areas (3), and golf and mini golf facilities (2), The results of this question varied spatially and are detailed by RPD group in Chapter 5, Goals and Objectives.

Hypothetical Budget Allocations

Survey respondents were asked, "If you were given $100 to spend on Baltimore County's park system, how would you budget it? Please fill in dollar amounts, totaling $100." They were given the following options:

- Acquire additional sites for the sole purpose of preserving more green or open space
- Acquire additional sites on which to construct parks
- Improved maintenance and repair of existing parks and recreation facilities
- Provide additional diverse recreational facilities such as dog parks, skateboard parks, community gardens and disc golf courses
- Provide additional indoor recreation facilities such as recreation centers, gymnasiums and indoor sports fields
- Provide additional places to walk, jog or bicycle, including trails and paved paths
- Provide additional small-scale park amenities such as playgrounds, tot lots, picnic pavilions and picnic areas
- Provide additional traditional outdoor sports facilities such as ball diamonds, athletic fields and sports courts
- Provide more facilities dedicated to nature, the arts, history and culture, such as nature centers, theaters and outdoor stages

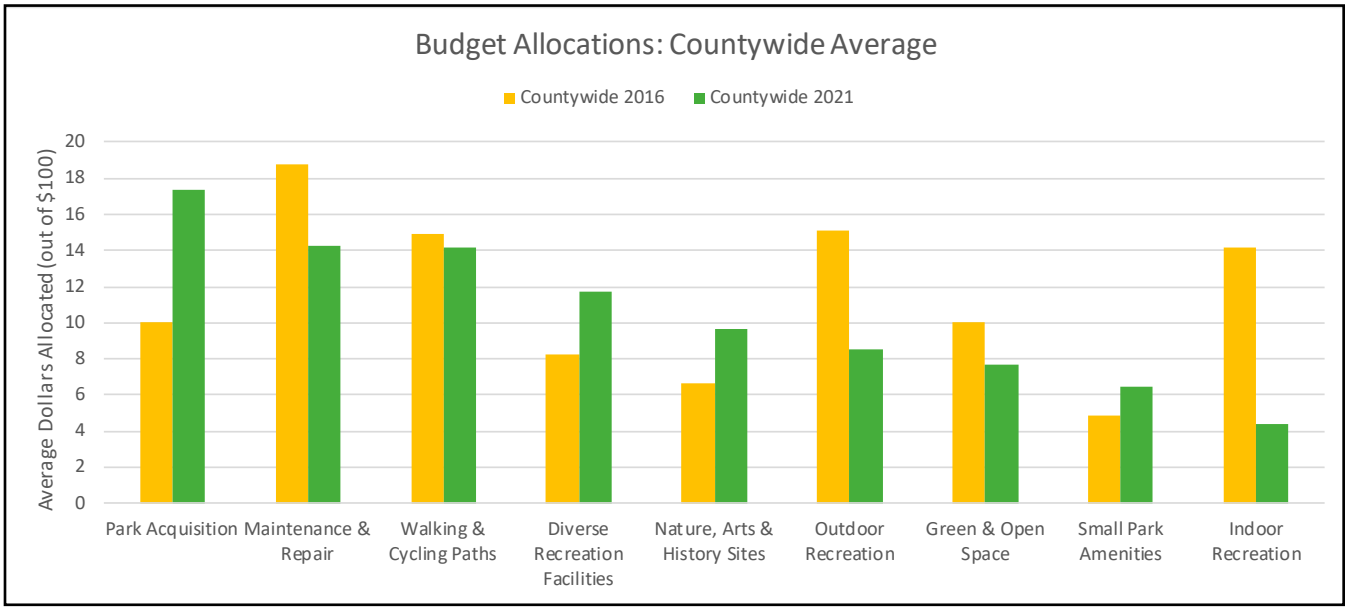


Figure 54. Average Budget Allocations, 2016 and 2021

Countywide, the category to which respondents allocated the highest dollar amount was park acquisition, followed by maintenance and repair, and walking and cycling paths. The desire for park acquisition increased significantly from 2016 (from $10.05 to $17.36 on average out of $100). Maintenance and repair, which was valued highest in 2016 decreased (from $18.76 to $14.27), though it remains the number two priority for survey respondents.

There were significant decreases in the dollars allocated to outdoor and indoor sports facilities in respondents' hypothetical budget. This is in line with responses to the question of what amenities are desired in greater quantities, where the interest in additional athletic fields decreased. The results of this question varied spatially and are detailed by RPD group in Chapter 5, Goals and Objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEVEL OF SERVICE



4.1 - Proximity Analysis

The DRP aims to have quality open space and recreation facilities that can be easily accessed by all Baltimore County residents. The survey is an important step toward this goal, as it helps us to understand community-identified needs. In addition, analyses on facility provision were conducted to evaluate the distribution of these spaces and identify priority areas for land acquisition or park improvements.



To assess the proximity of a variety of facilities, density analyses were performed. Each park is visualized by a point and a radius miles is drawn around each point that contains a certain facility, such as baseball diamonds. Areas within the radius are assigned a higher value than areas outside. Areas near parks with multiple facilities are assigned a higher value than areas near parks with only one of the facility. This analysis yields a heat map, which represents areas with a greater local level of service with a darker color. This analysis was performed using a radius of 1 mile and 3 miles to show varying levels of proximity to facilities. Each map includes a line showing the URDL; areas inside the URDL are considered urban and would be expected to have a higher density of recreation and parks facilities than rural areas.



This analysis was conducted for athletic fields, ball diamonds, multi-purpose courts, tennis courts, indoor recreation facilities, playgrounds, picnic facilities, trails, pickleball, water access, and local parklands and SRCs. To better understand the level of service provided, demographic information was incorporated based on RPD group, showing the total population served by each facility. A lower number indicates a higher level of service because each facility is serving fewer people. This is based on 2020 population estimates and are compared against results from the previous LPPRP. Since population has generally grown faster than new facilities have been built, the figure for population served by each facility generally increases in these comparisons.

The facility counts are for facilities at site types including County parks and leased recreation sites, and at public school recreation centers. Facilities situated at state and federal parks, or on private open spaces and parklands for which there is no associated lease or similar agreement that grants public recreation access, are not included. For the sake of simplicity, facilities within regional and countywide parks are included within the facility counts, though it should be noted that many such facilities serve a wider area than a single RPD Group.



The facility counts provided are simplified and do not take into account a range of factors that may impact the recreational functionality and level of use offered by each facility. For example, the figures for ball diamonds and athletic fields do not take into account their size, surface type, or field lighting systems; the quantities for playgrounds do not reflect the size of the playgrounds or extent of equipment available; the numbers of multi-purpose courts do not reflect how many usable basketball courts are present, or if the courts feature lights; the picnic data does not reflect the widely varying size of picnic pavilions; the miles of trails do not indicate the trail or path surface type; and the numbers for SRCs and community centers do not indicate the nature or quantity of indoor facilities situated with such structures. Still, the information presented below provides a broad illustration of the level of service by facility type.

Athletic Fields





Athletic Fields are used for a wide range of activities including soccer, lacrosse, football, field hockey, rugby, and more. Athletic field sizes vary widely, and many are overlaid with one or more ball diamonds, with most of the field area on the grassy outfield areas of the diamond(s). The manner in which athletic fields are used for organized programs may change based on the activity and the playing age group. For activities such as clinic soccer or soft-stick lacrosse, a single full-sized athletic field could be temporarily sectioned off into multiple fields to accommodate young age groups.

The northern part of the county has a low density of athletic fields. Within the URDL, nearly the entire area has access to an athletic field within three miles, though there are gaps in service when using a one mile radius.

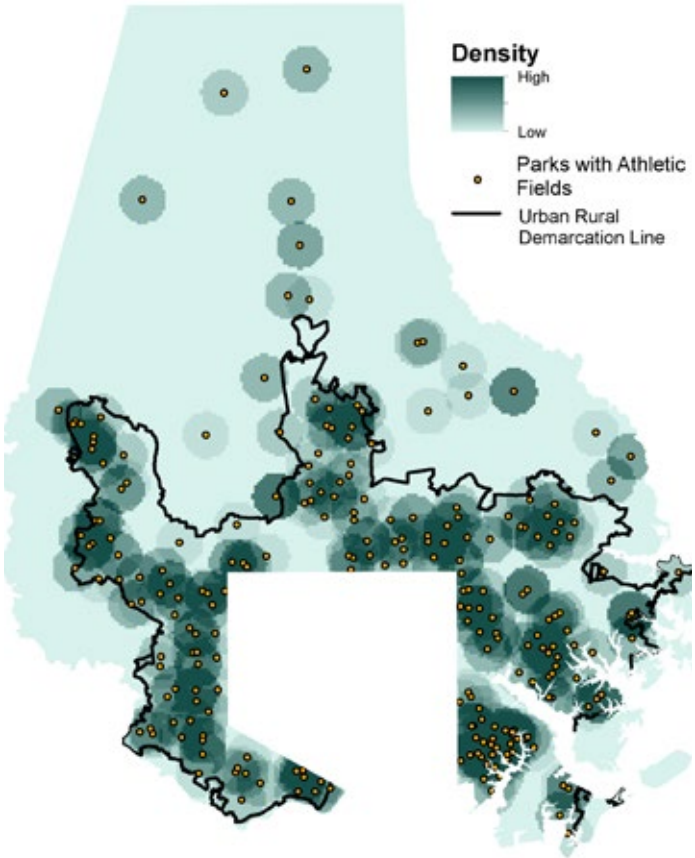


Figure 55. Athletic Fields Proximity: 1 Mile

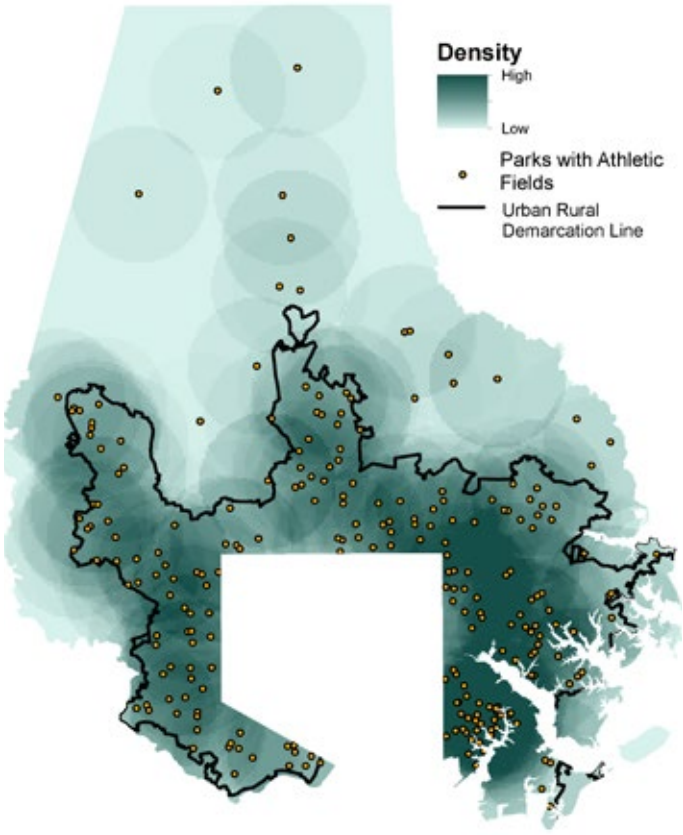


Figure 56. Athletic Fields Proximity: 3 Miles

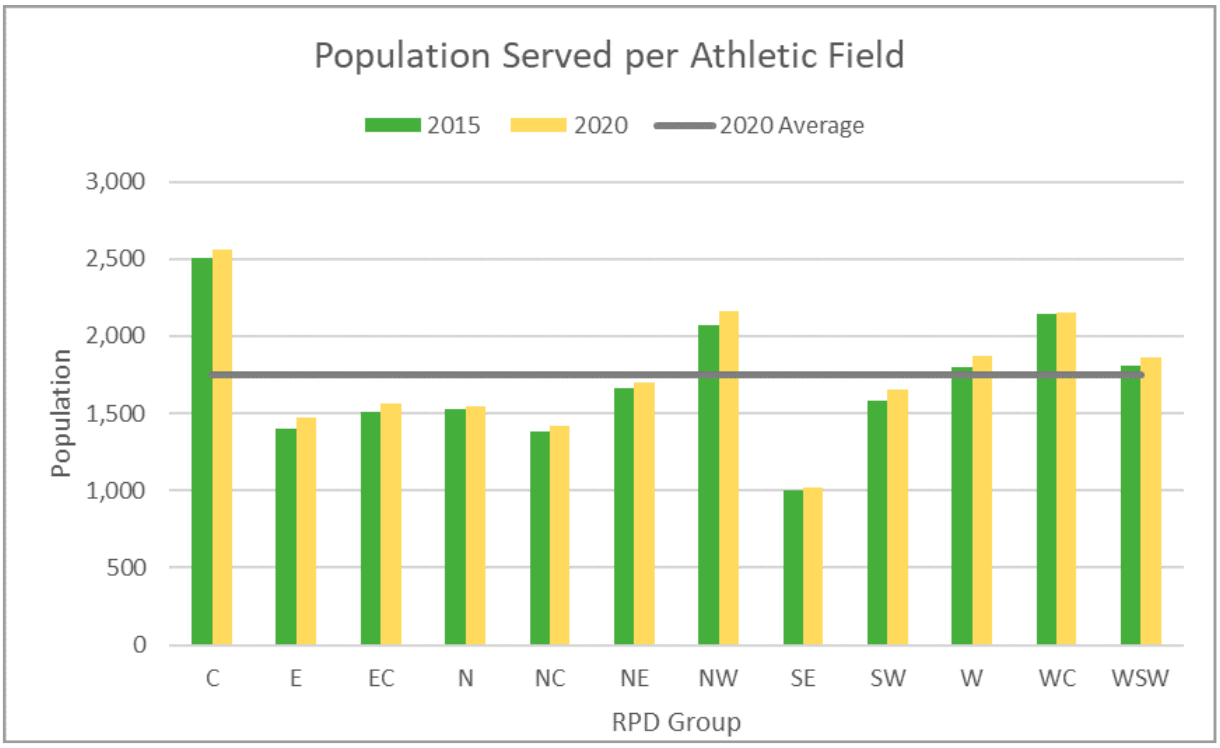


Figure 57. Population Served per Athletic Field in each RPD Group

The Southeast has about one field for every 1,000 residents, which is the highest level of service in Baltimore County. The Central, Northwest, West, West Central, and West Southwest RPD groups perform worse than the average. The Central RPD group has a significantly greater population served per athletic field, meaning that this may be an area where additional fields could be considered to better serve residents.

Ball Diamonds





Ball Diamonds are used for such sports as baseball, softball, tee-ball, and kickball. The size of the diamonds varies, ranging from those with 60' base paths, to 90' diamonds suitable for adult baseball. The demand for the latter has increased over the years, partially as a result of changing standards for certain teen age groups, with certain leagues now requiring longer base paths than in the past.

The density of ball diamonds is similar to that of athletic fields, with the northern part of the county having the lowest density. Within the URDL, nearly the entire area has access to an athletic field within three miles, though there are gaps in service when using a one mile radius.

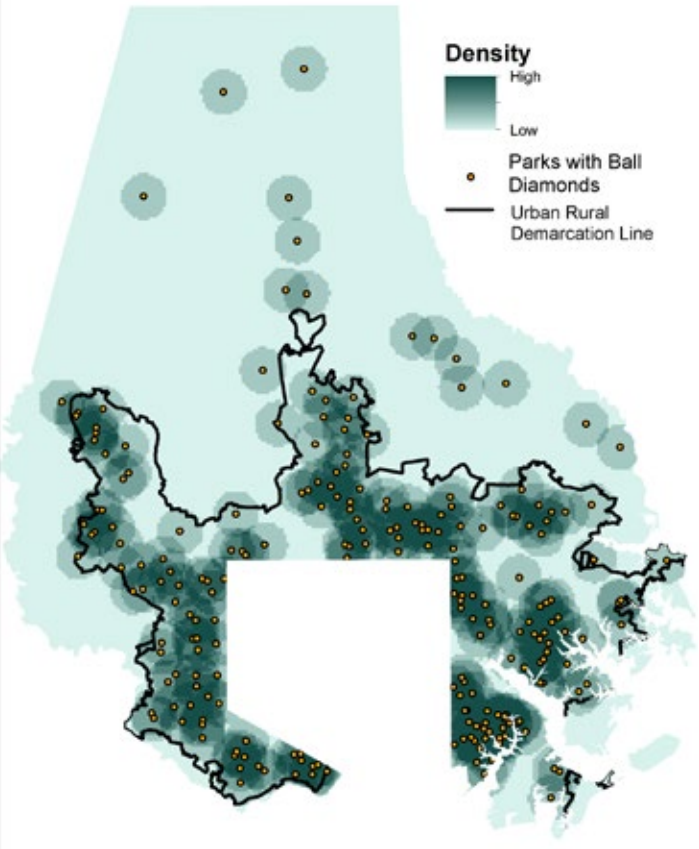


Figure 59. Ball Diamonds Proximity: 1 Mile

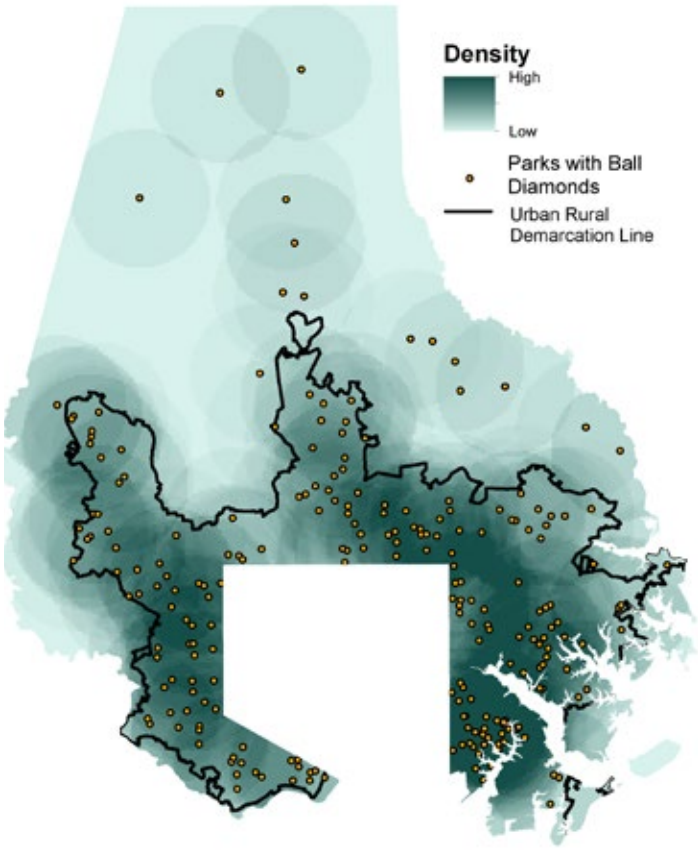


Figure 58. Ball Diamonds Proximity: 3 Miles

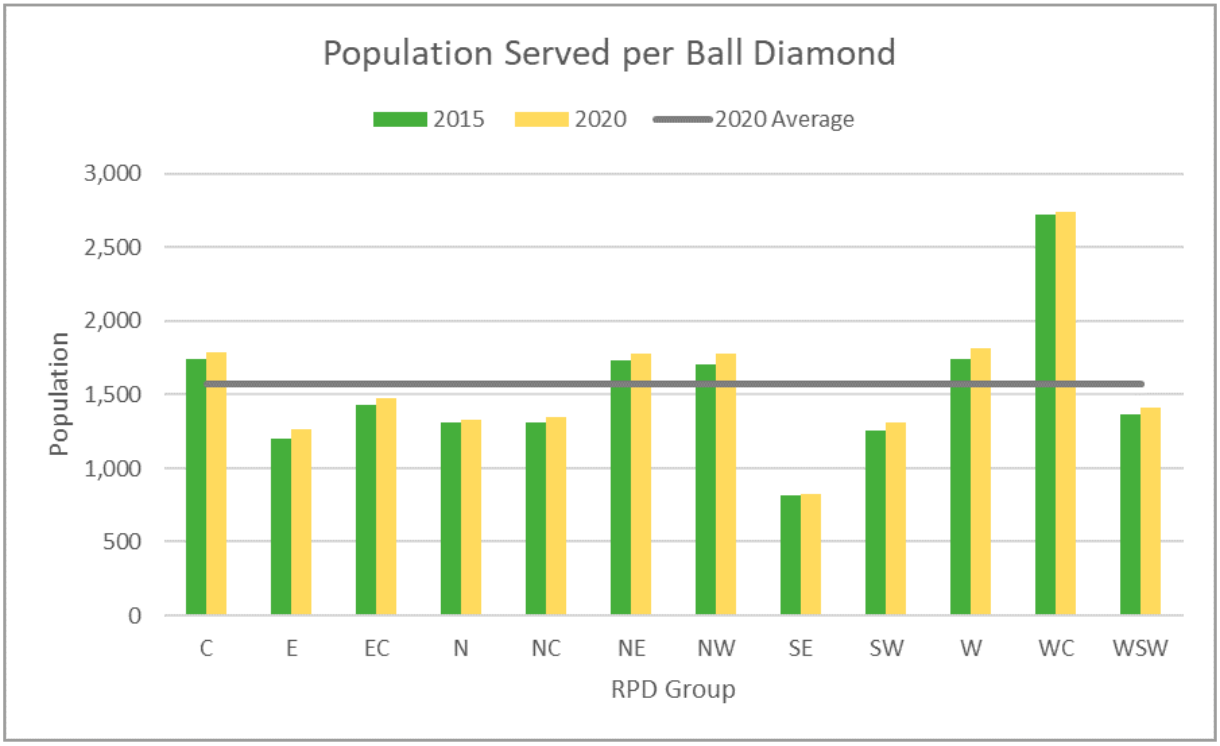


Figure 60. Population Served per Ball Diamond in each RPD Group

Similar to athletic fields, the Southeast has the greatest provision of ball diamonds. The Central, Northeast, Northwest, West, and West Central are all performing worse than the average of about 1,500 people served per ball diamond. The West Central has the has a significantly greater population served per athletic field, meaning that this may be an area where additional fields could be considered to better serve residents.

Multi-Purpose Courts





Multi-Purpose Courts include outdoor basketball courts, and other courts used for a wide variety of recreational purposes. Some have lines for four square or pickleball. In a few cases, the courts have been converted to special uses such as outdoor soccer fields. The court quantities are estimations of the approximate number of basketball courts that could be situated within the court areas of the parks and SRCs.

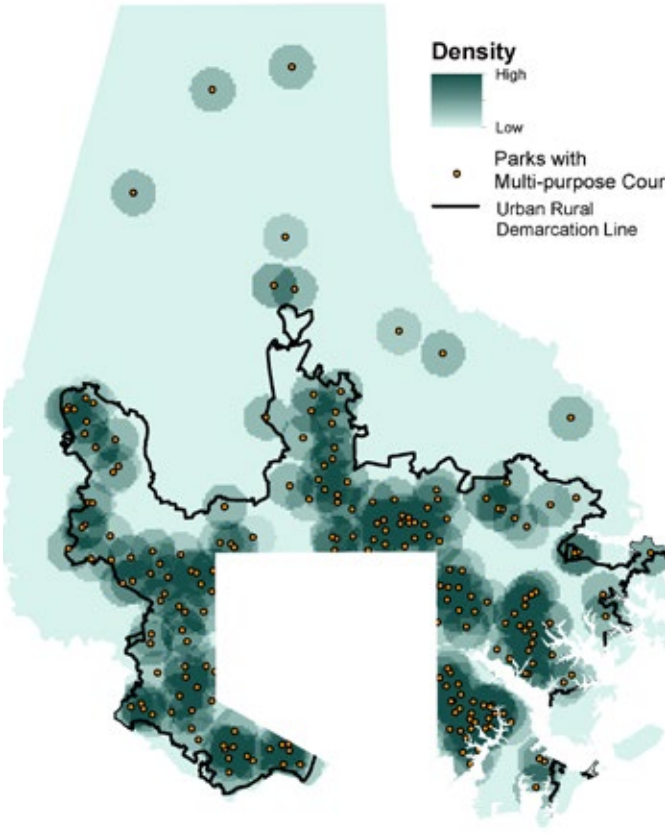


Figure 61. Multi-Purpose Court Proximity: 1 Mile

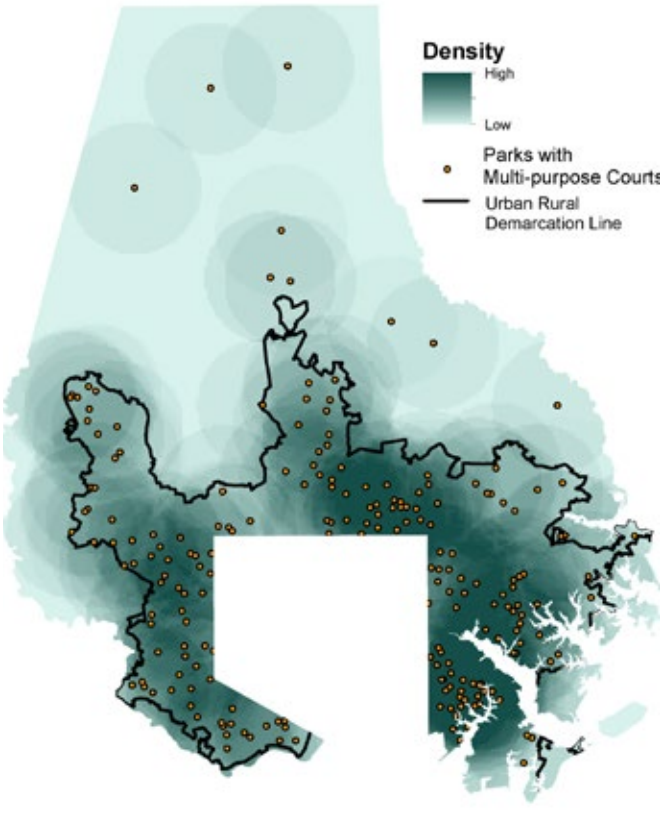


Figure 62. Multi-Purpose Court Proximity: 3 Miles

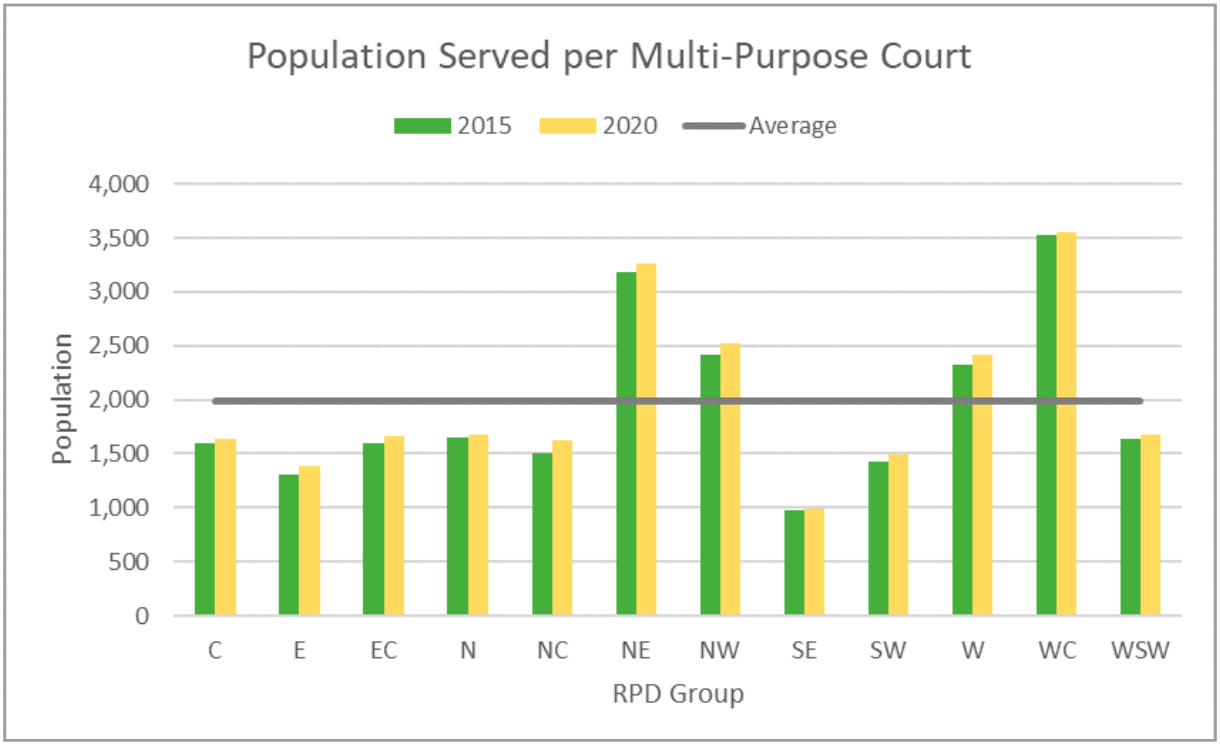


Figure 63. Population Served per Multi-Purpose Court in each RPD Group

The Southeast RPD group has the greatest provision of multi-purpose courts for its population. The Northeast, Northwest, West, and West Central perform worse than the countywide average. The Northeast and West Central RPD groups have the lowest level of service and might be areas to consider for additional multi-purpose courts.

Tennis Courts





Tennis Courts are available in many parks and school recreation centers. They may have other lines overlaid, such as those for pickleball. The demand for tennis varies widely throughout the County, with some communities having sufficient demand for leagues to operate, while in others the courts are used for other activities as much as for tennis.

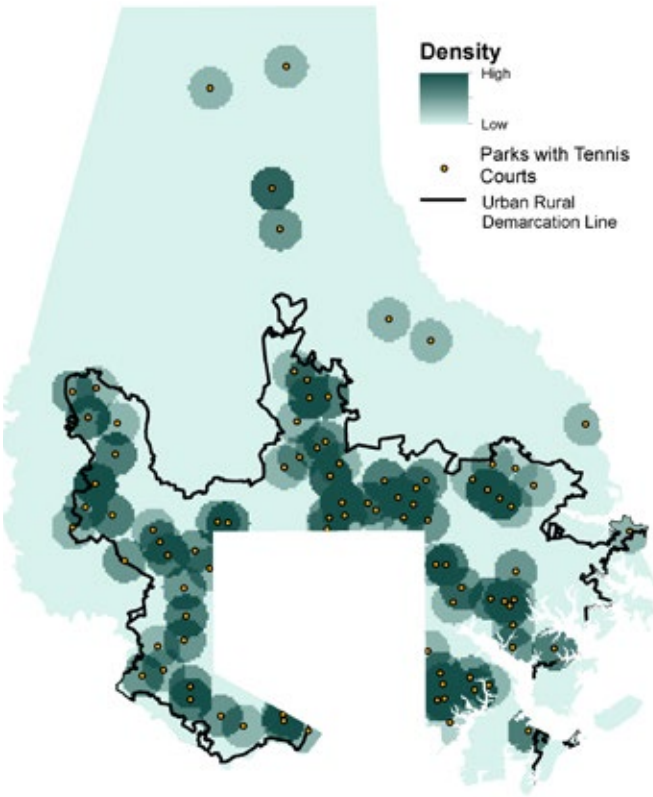


Figure 64. Tennis Court Proximity: 1 Mile

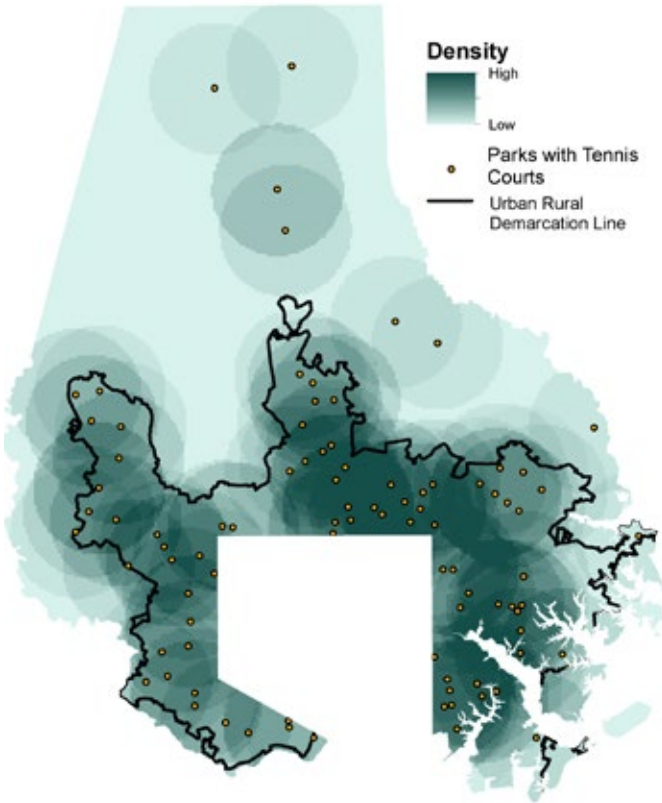


Figure 65. Tennis Court Proximity: 3 Miles

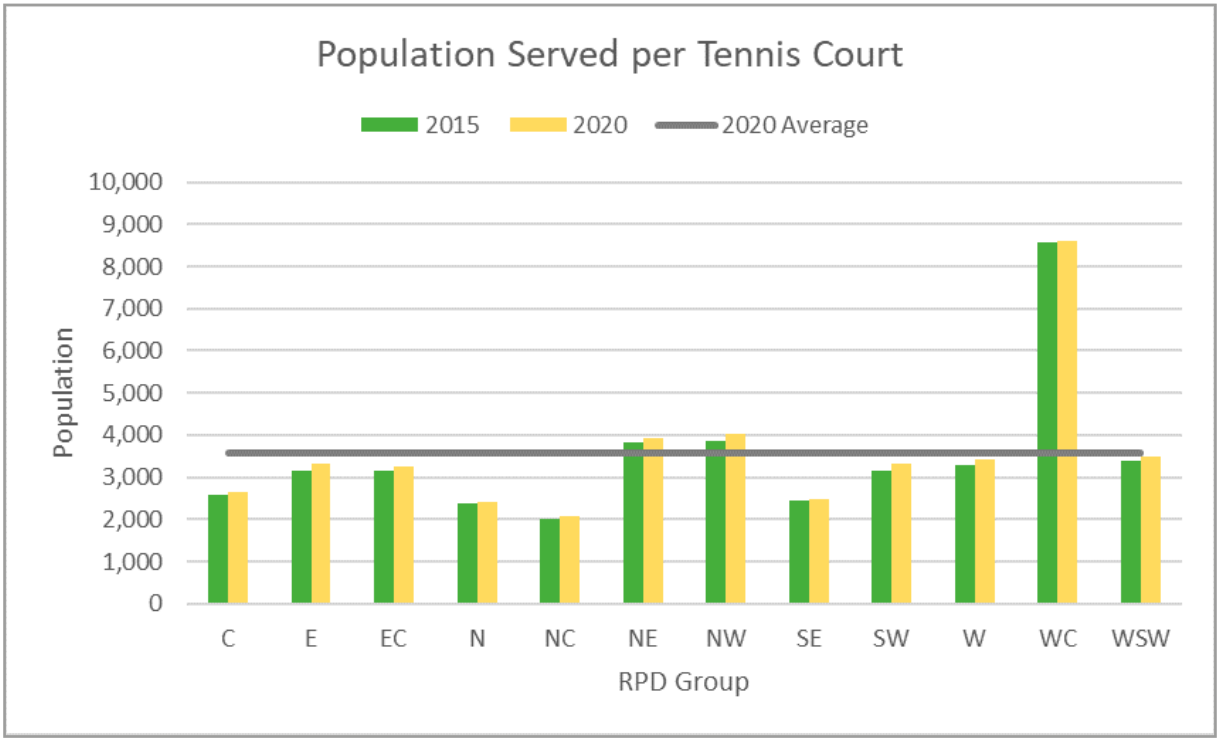


Figure 66. Population Served per Tennis Court in each RPD Group

The North Central RPD group has the best provision of tennis courts for the population. The West Central performs far worse than the average for the county.

Indoor Recreation Facilities





Indoor Recreation Facilities are essential for providing year-round public recreation. The quantity, nature, and availability of indoor recreation facilities at community centers, recreation centers, PAL centers, and school recreation centers vary widely. Some community/recreation centers are small and may only offer one activity rooms. Others include large gymnasiums and multiple activity rooms. Some elementary SRCs feature smaller gyms, while others were constructed with expanded middle SRC-sized gyms that support expanded recreational uses. In many cases the indoor recreation facilities at high SRCs provide less overall public indoor recreation opportunities than middle SRCs because of scholastic sports programs. The analysis was conducted based on an enumeration of PAL centers, community centers and SRCs.

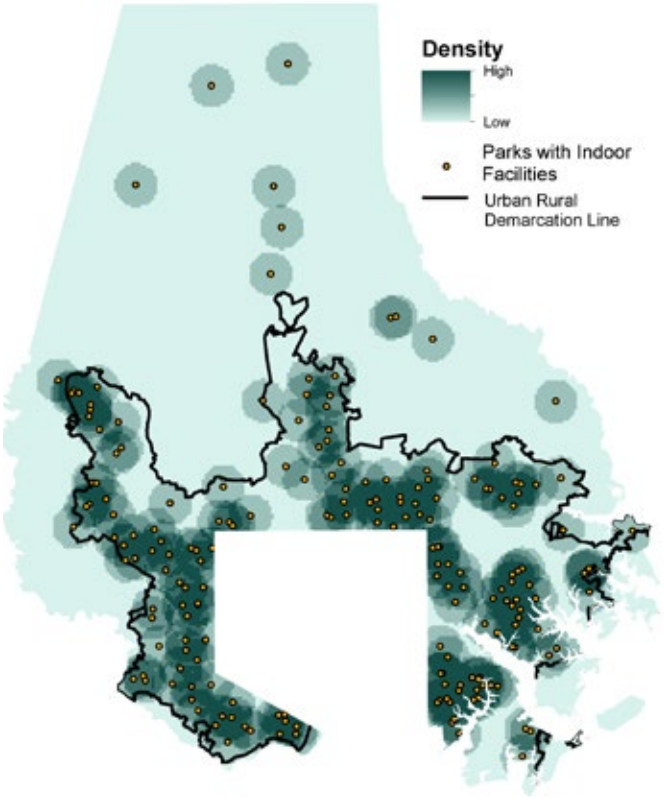


Figure 67. Indoor Recreation Facility Proximity: 1 Mile

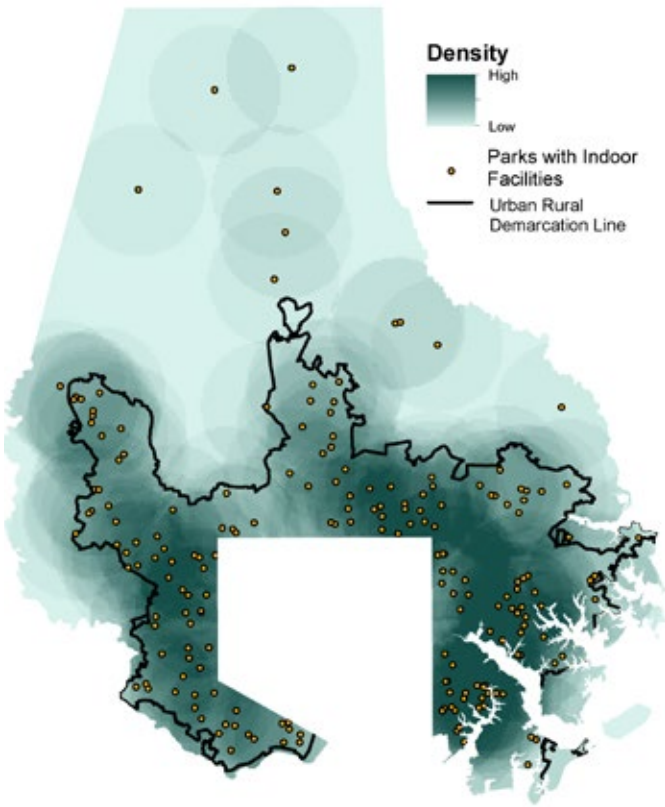


Figure 68. Indoor Recreation Facility Proximity: 3 Miles

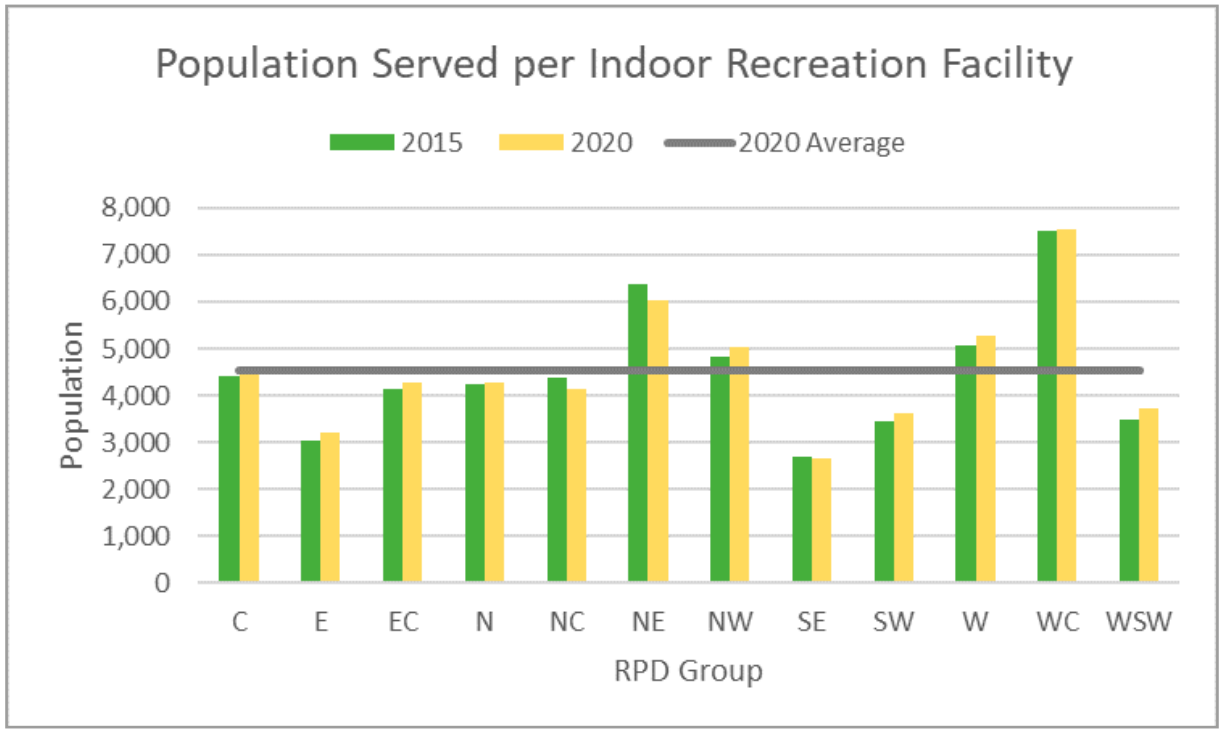


Figure 69. Population Served per Indoor Recreation Facility in each RPD Group

The Southeast RPD group has the best provision of indoor recreation facilities for the population. The West Central and Northeast RPD groups perform worse than the countywide average.

Pickleball Courts





Pickleball has risen in popularity in recent years and there has been a growing demand in Baltimore County for facilities. Lines for pickleball may be overlaid on tennis courts or on standalone courts. In instances of shared use, players typically need to bring their own nets. As the maps below show, there are limited pickleball courts in Baltimore County, with the majority of the county lacking convenient access. The DRP is currently gauging community interest in additional courts.

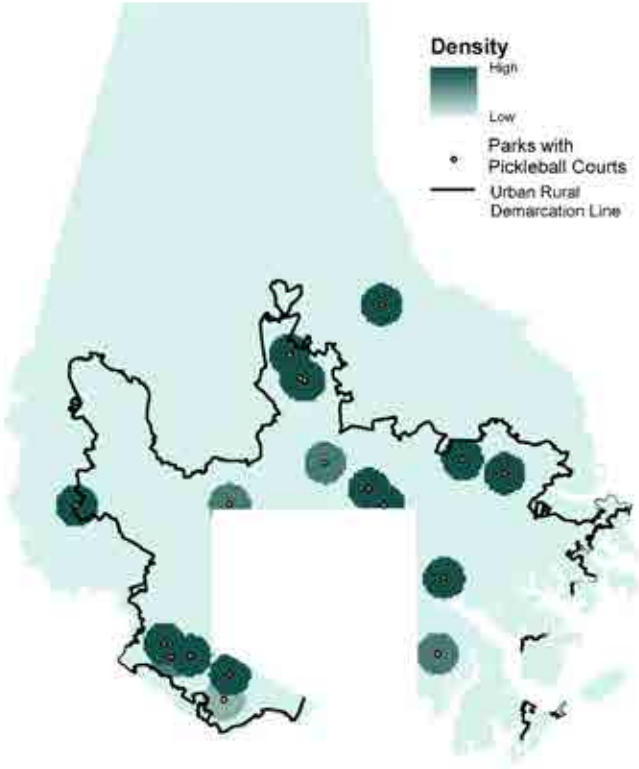


Figure 70. Pickleball Court Proximity: 1 Mile

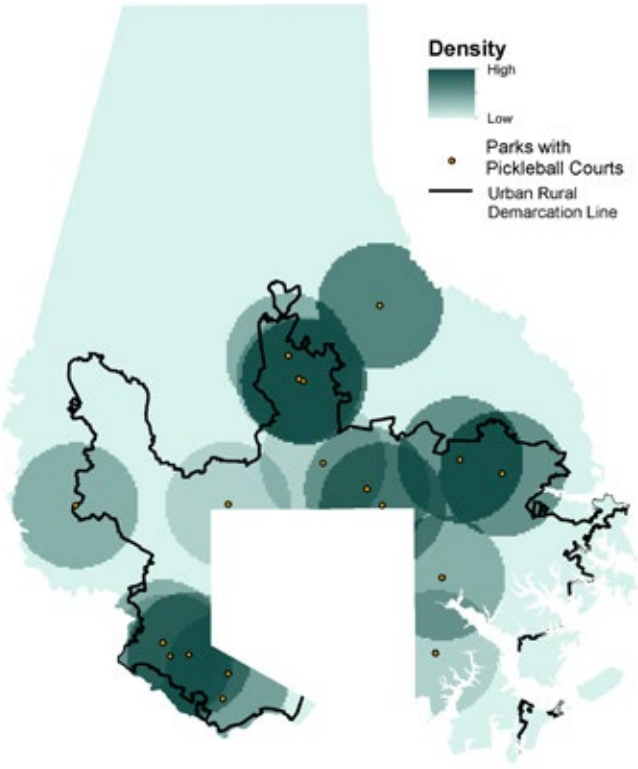


Figure 71. Pickleball Court Proximity: 3 Miles

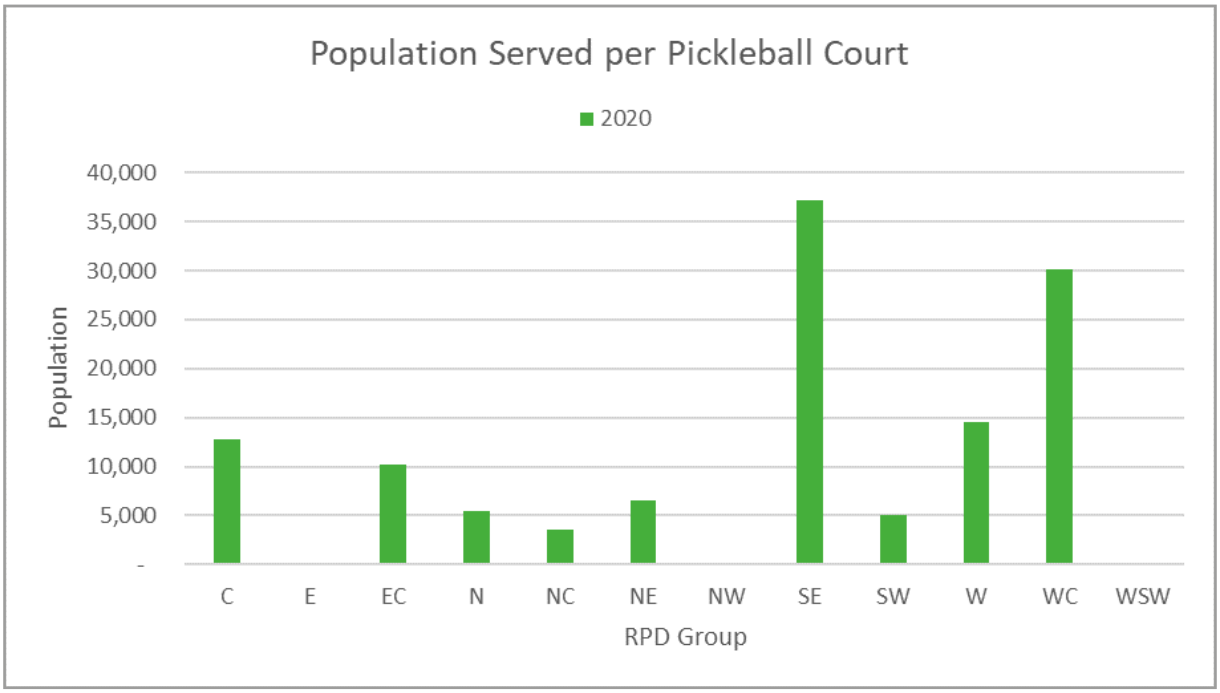


Figure 72. Population Served per Pickleball Court in each RPD Group

The East, Northwest, and West Southwest RPD groups lack any pickleball courts, therefore no average was calculated. The North, North Central, Northeast and Southwest have the best level of service for pickleball, though there are still limited facilities for the populations. Since the availability of pickleball facilities varies so widely through the County, with several RPD groups having no courts, no average was calculated.

Playgrounds





Playgrounds are counted based on the number of distinct clusters of playgrounds at the local sites. A cluster would be a grouping of equipment, whether in a single area, or in multiple "boxes." Some sites such as Oregon Ridge Park and Double Rock Park have playgrounds in two distinct clusters or locations.

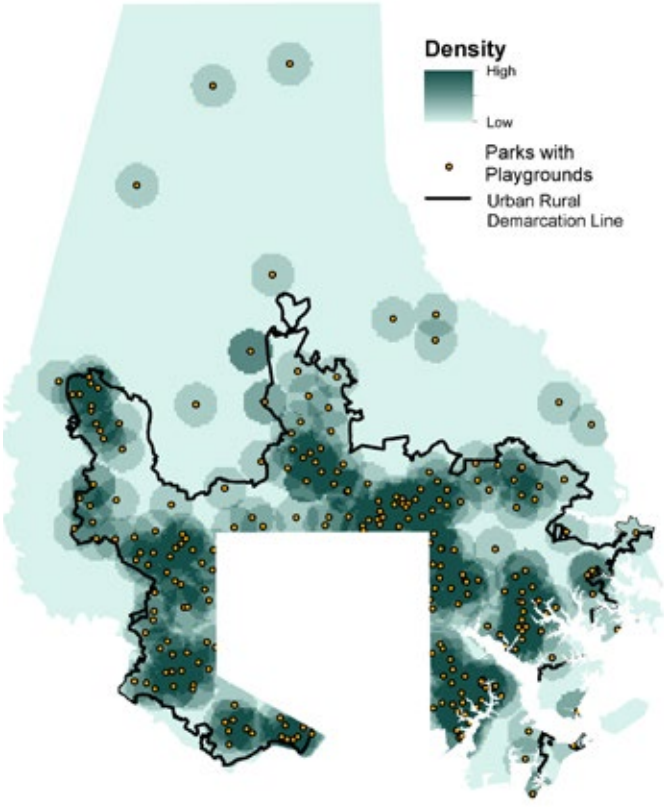


Figure 73. Playground Proximity: 1 Mile

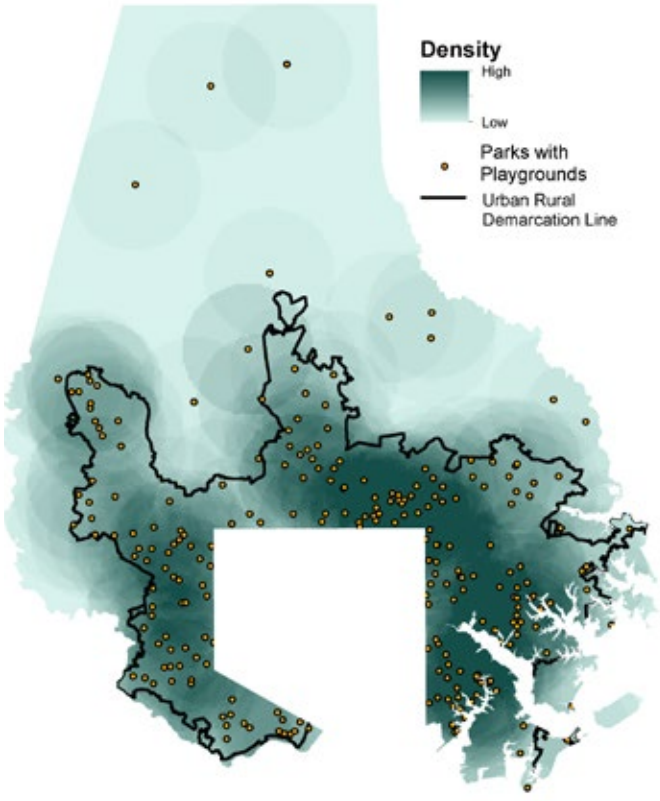


Figure 74. Playground Proximity: 3 Miles

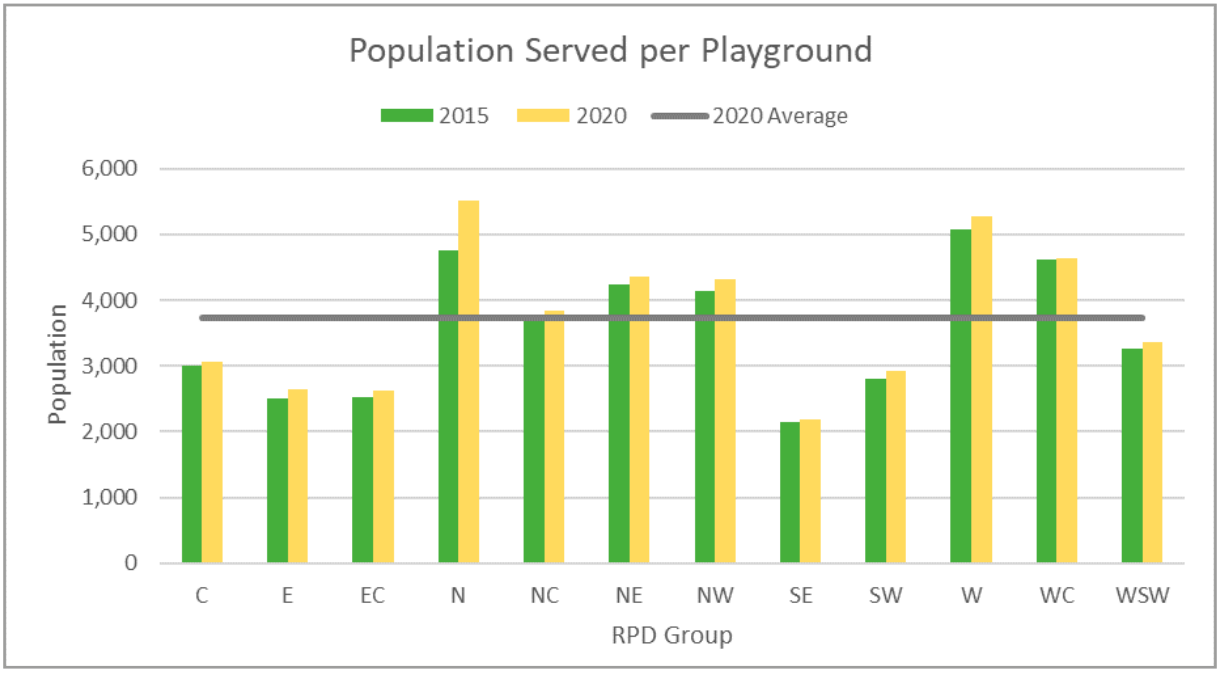


Figure 75. Population Served per Playground in each RPD Group

The Southeast RPD group has the greatest provision of playgrounds, with about one playground for every 2,000 residents. The North, Northeast, Northwest, West, and West Central RPD groups all perform worse than the countywide average.

Picnic Facilities





Picnic Facilities include pavilions and any areas with stationary charcoal grills. There are many picnic tables or open fields suitable to picnicking located within the county, but these are hard to define. Picnic tables not located in pavilions are often transient, moved between parks for special events and festivals. State parks also have picnic facilities that are not represented in this analysis. Many people may choose to picnic in our parks on benches or fields, though those casual uses are not accounted for here.

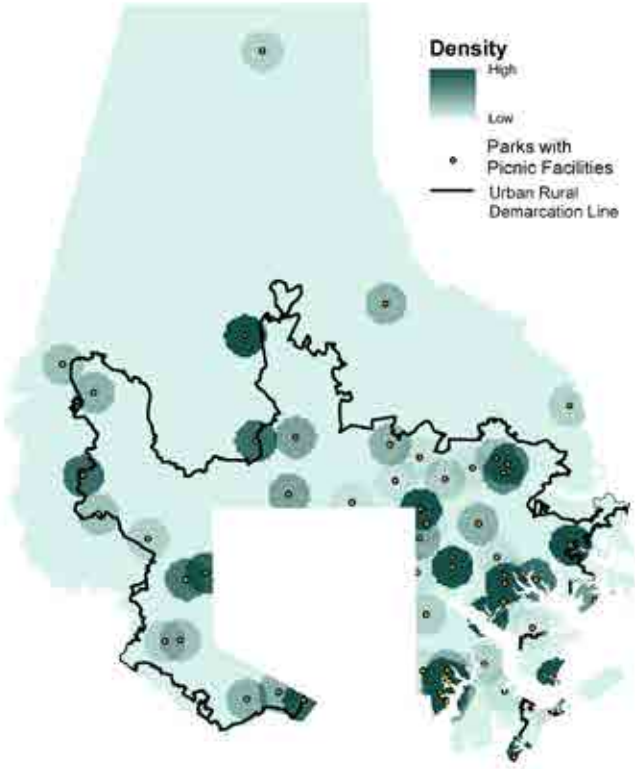


Figure 76. Picnic Facilities Proximity: 1 Mile

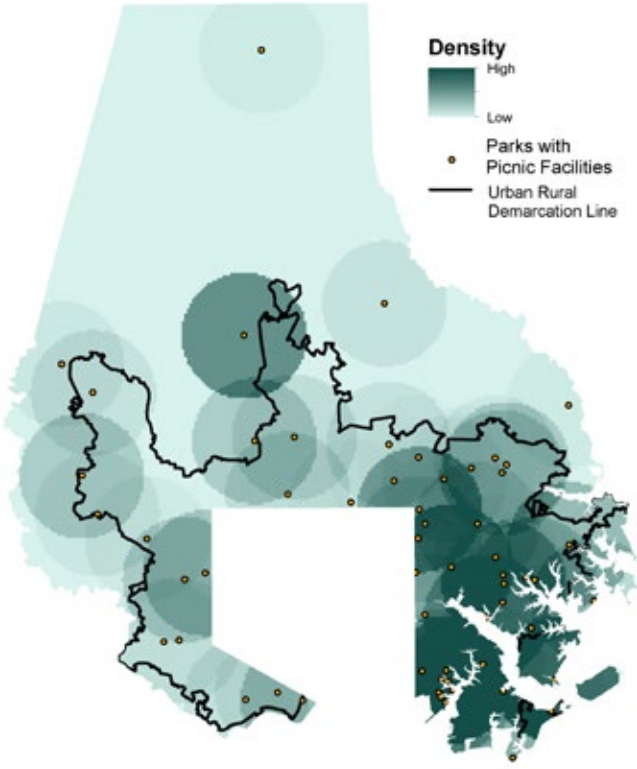


Figure 77. Picnic Facilities Proximity: 3 Miles

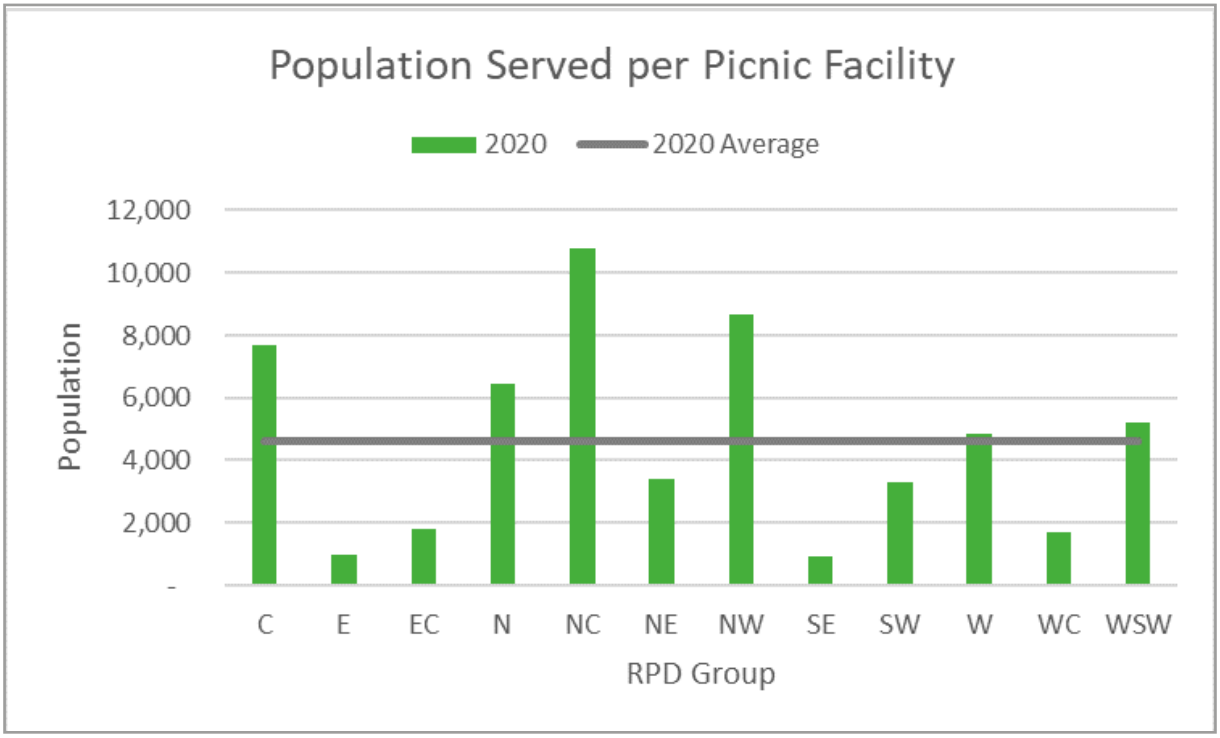
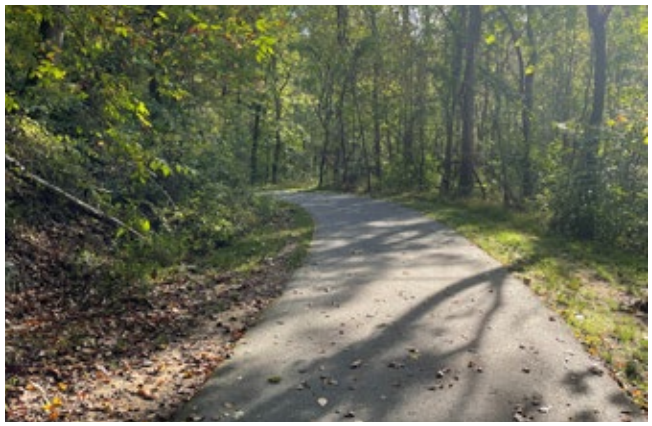


Figure 78. Population Served per Picnic Facilities in each RPD Group

The East and Southeast RPD groups have the greatest provision of picnic facilities, with about one for every 1,000 residents. Both of these areas have waterfront parks, which are particularly popular for picnics and therefore have a good provision of pavilions. The Central, North, North Central, and Northwest RPD groups all perform worse than the countywide average.

Trails





Trails include paved and natural paths located in county parks. The proximity analysis does not include state park or reservoir property trails, which are extensive. State trails are represented with lines on this map to demonstrate that there are additional trails available to Baltimore County residents, though many of the State Parks are only accessible with an admission/parking fee. Trails in Baltimore City are also represented in the maps below, as many County residents inside the URDL may use City trails for recreation.

The regional parks Oregon Ridge, Lake Roland, and Cromwell Valley have a strong influence on this map, as they have the most extensive trail networks in the county's park system. These parks are a draw for people from around the county and therefore provide an even greater level of service than is represented. There is a light rail stop near Lake Roland, making its trails accessible to a greater number of people from both within and outside the county without using a vehicle.

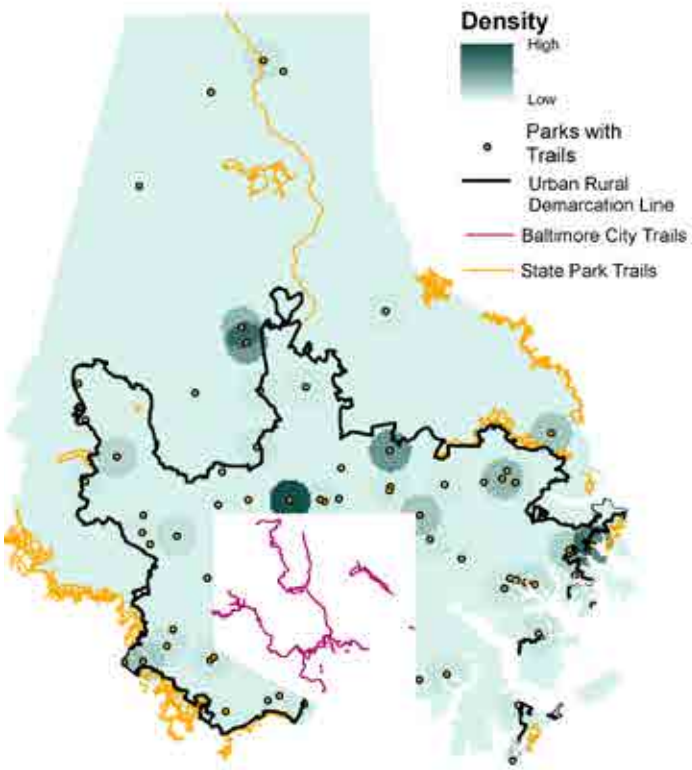


Figure 79. Trail Proximity: 1 Mile

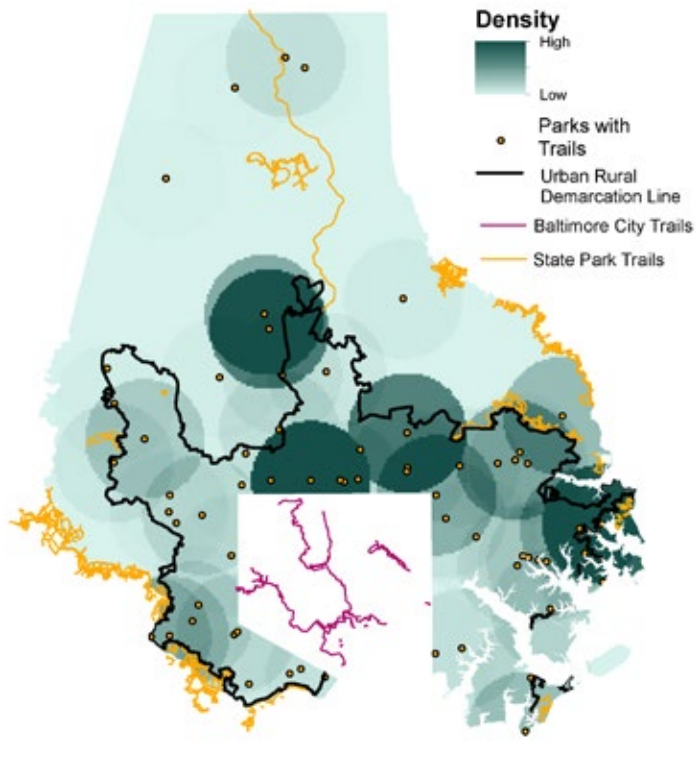


Figure 80. Trail Proximity: 3 Miles

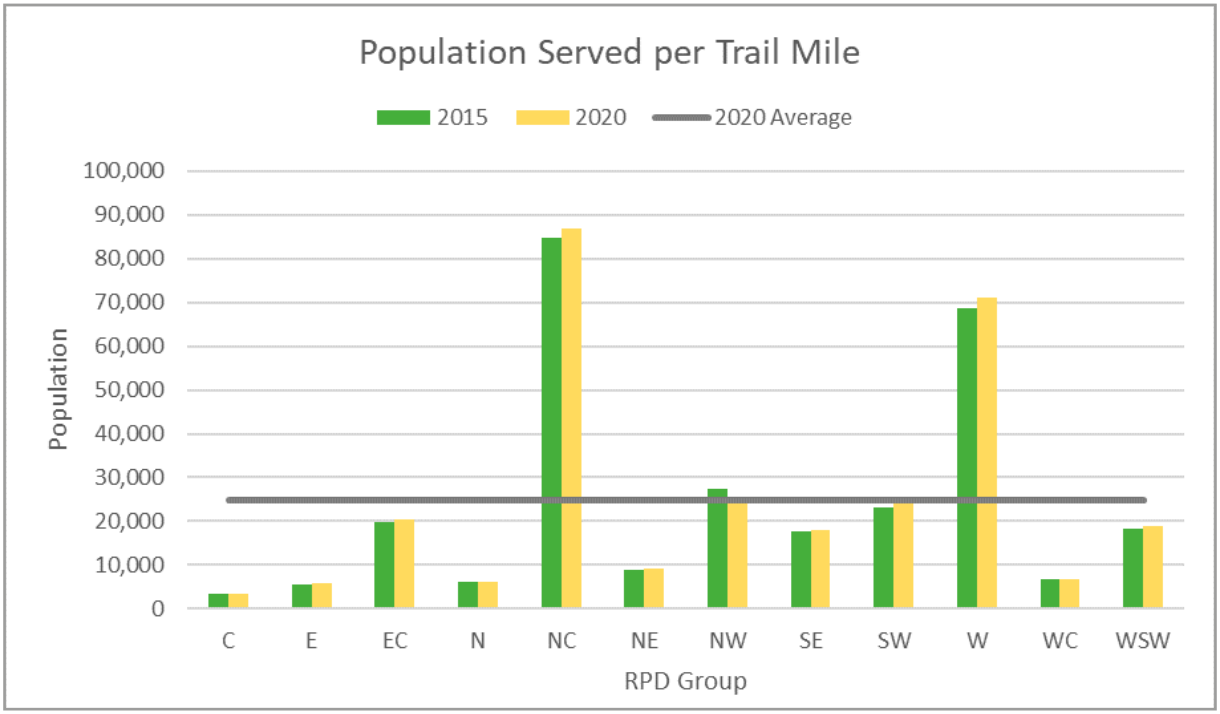


Figure 81. Population Served per Trail Mile in each RPD Group

For County-owned trails, the North Central and West RPD groups are the least well served. However, the West RPD group includes portions of Patapsco Valley State Park and the North Central borders the State-owned Torrey C. Brown Trail.

Water Access





Water Access is provided by ramps and piers. The maps below show where one of these facilities is present in a county-owned park. Some State Parks include water access, but are not included here. Due to the geography of the county, some regions do not have these facilities. However, facilities like the Loch Raven Fishing Center draw residents from other regions in the county.

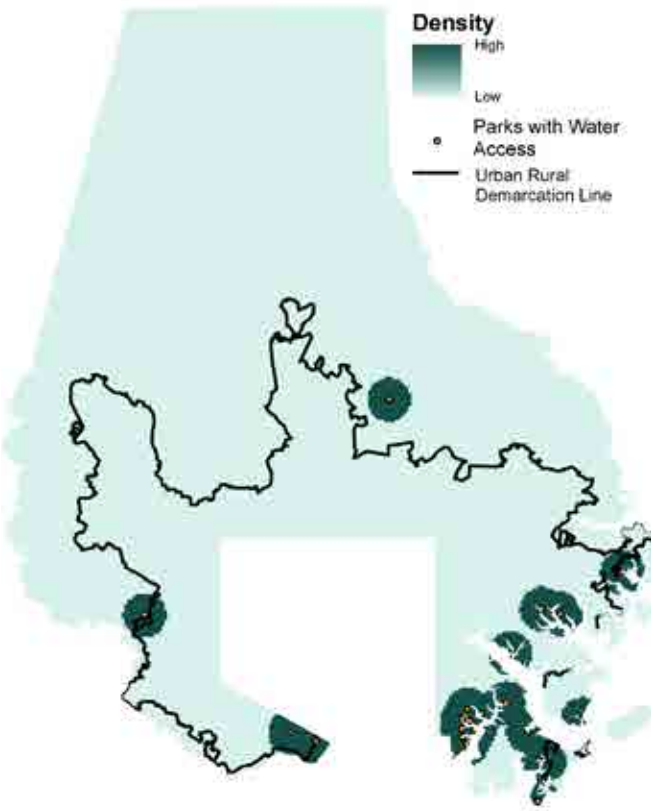


Figure 82. Water Access Proximity: 1 Mile

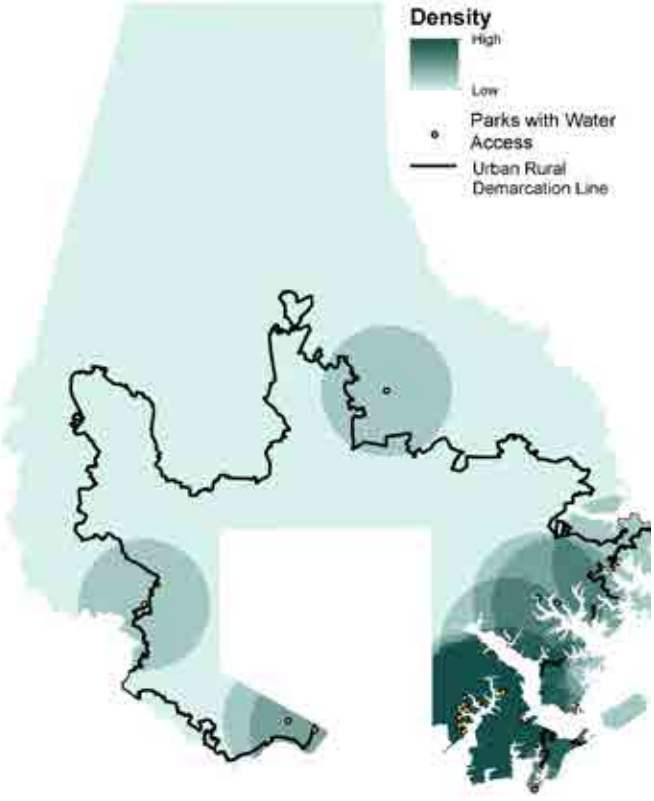


Figure 83. Water Access Proximity: 3 Miles

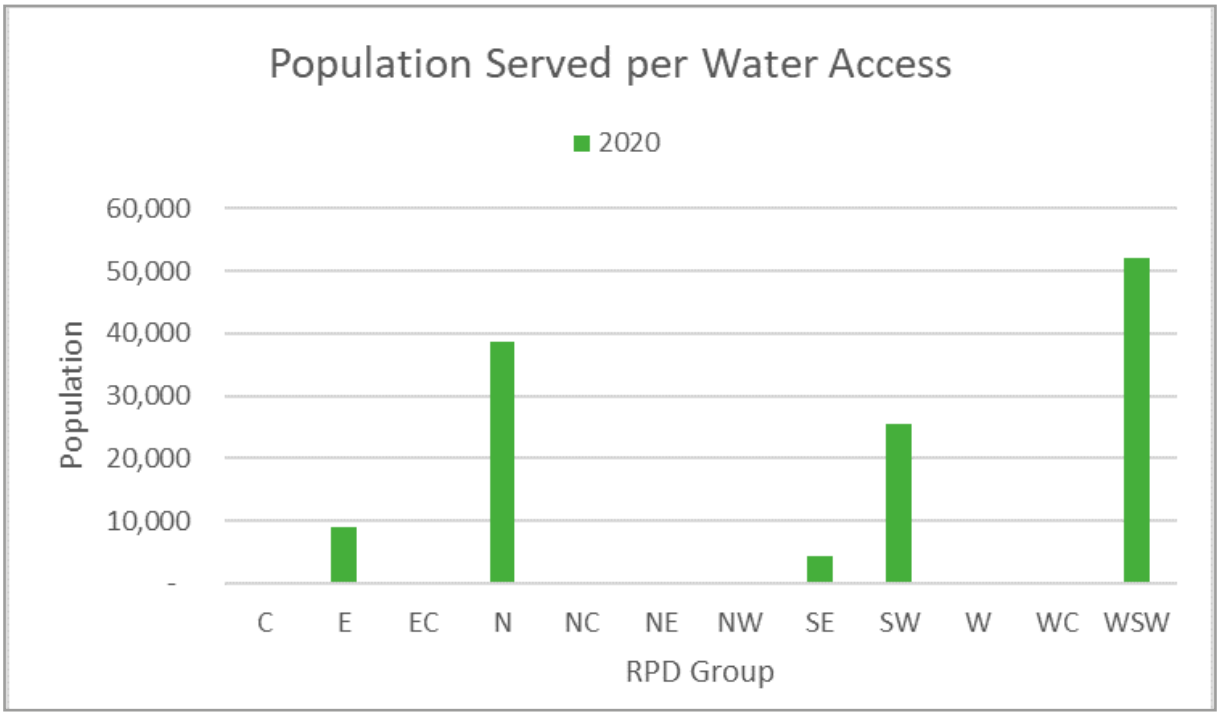


Figure 84. Population Served per Water Access point in each RPD Group

Due to the geography of the County, there are several RPD groups where no ramps or piers exist, therefore no average was calculated. Ramps and piers typically serve a high number of residents and usually serve residents from other regions of the County, who travel in order to use the facilities.

Entire Recreation and Parks System





The entire recreation and parks system in Baltimore County includes County Parks, State Parks, Baltimore City Reservoirs, a National Park, School Recreation Centers, and Public Golf Courses. There are a total of 585 sites in these categories, covering a total of about 50,000 acres. There is a much greater density of recreation and parks sites in the urban sections of the County, though some of the sites in the rural areas, such as Liberty Reservoir,

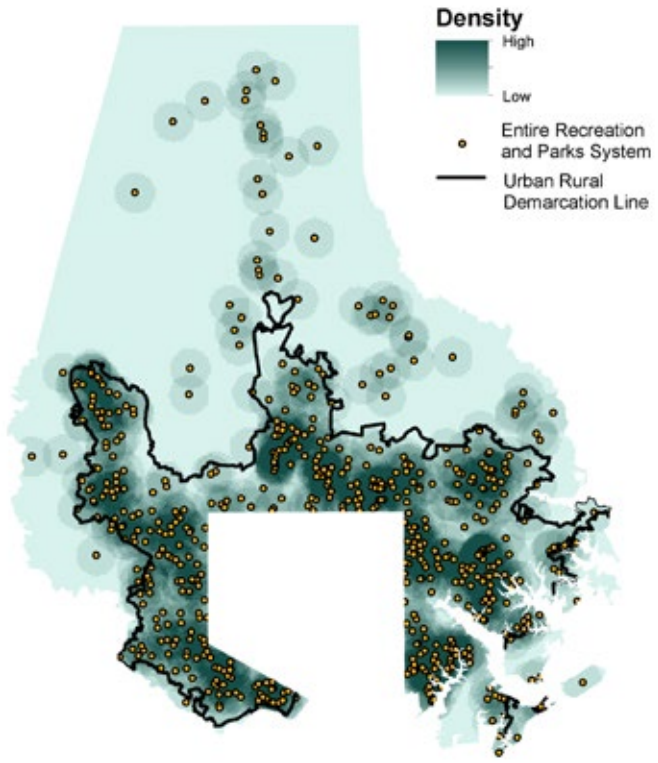


Figure 85. Entire System Proximity: 1 Mile

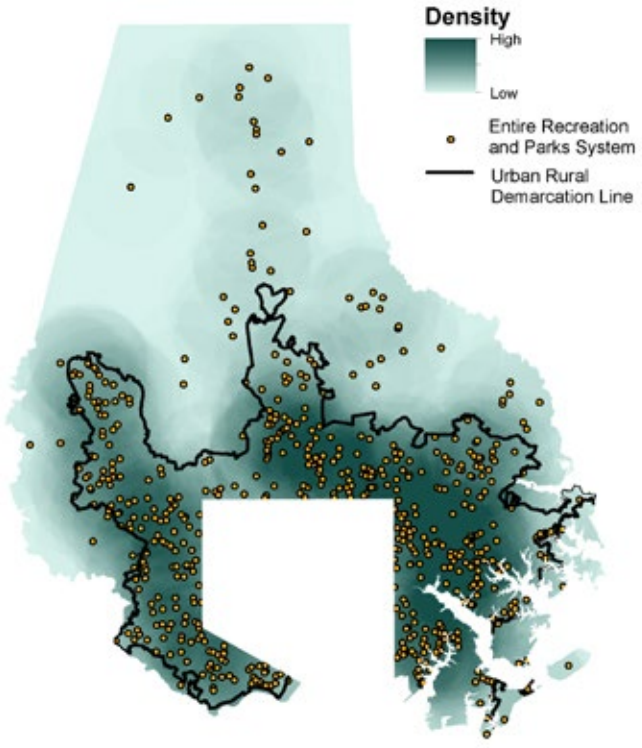


Figure 86. Entire System Proximity: 3 Miles

Local Park and School Recreation Centers

While residents enjoy recreational benefits from the entire system of recreation and parks sites in Baltimore County, neighborhood parks, community parks, and school recreation centers provide the most localized benefits and thus require the greatest analysis by RPD group. In addition, acquisitions of land for small parks are often most feasible and so it is most important to understand where these facilities may be needed Local facilities are particularly valued by residents for daily use and make Baltimore County a great place to live.

The table below summarizes the number and acreage of neighborhood parks, community parks, and school recreation centers per RPD group. Notably, the West Central has only two local parks and eight SRCs. While there is good access to Oregon Ridge Park, there is a need for more local sites in this urbanized part of the County. On the other end of the spectrum, the Southeast has a combined 51 local sites.





Table 7. Local park acreage summary for local parks and SRCs

RPD Group	Neighborhood Parks	Neighborhood Park Acreage	Community Parks	Community Park Acreage	School Rec Centers	School Rec Center Acreage	Total Local Sites	Total Local Site Acreage
Central	15	43.7	4	44.4	13	290.4	32	378.5
East	14	254.5	7	133.8	22	446.5	43	834.8
East Central	15	85.5	8	222.6	15	331.3	38	639.4
North	2	5.7	3	179.2	8	298.8	13	483.7
North Central	2	32.4	8	164.2	11	228.6	21	425.2
Northeast	4	7.3	11	350.4	10	228.9	25	586.6
Northwest	5	4.2	1	63.0	10	213.1	16	280.3
Southeast	13	99.8	18	351.2	20	372.2	51	823.2
Southwest	11	43.6	11	376.6	17	333.6	39	753.8
West	3	23.6	1	7.0	10	296.4	14	327
West Central	2	4.5	0	0.0	8	177.6	10	182.1
West Southwest	14	117.3	8	140.9	22	503.3	44	761.5

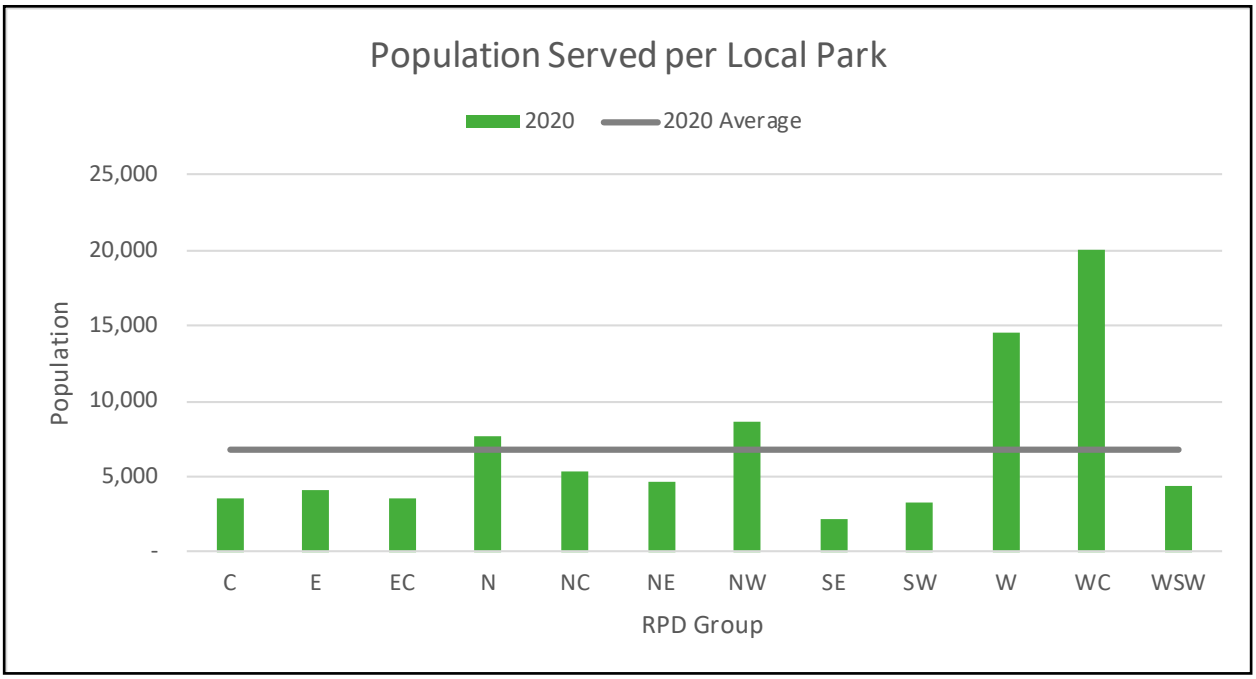


Figure 87. Population Served Acre of Local Parkland in each RPD Group

The West and West Central RPD groups have a significantly worse level of service than the county average in terms of local park sites, with about 15,000 and 20,000 people served per park, respectively. The Southeast has the best level of service, with about 2,100 people per acre of local parkland. The Northeast, which generally had the highest satisfaction in survey responses, performs better than the average.

When you include SRCs, the West Central and RPD groups continue to perform worse than the countywide average. Including SRCs, the Southeast RPD group continues to be the best served, with about 1,350 people served per local site. SRCs do not provide the same level of service as parkland because they are often busy with school-related programming, but they do provide some general open space and opportunities for recreation. For both local parks and local sites, including SRCs, the North and Northwest perform slightly worse than the county average in terms of people served per site.

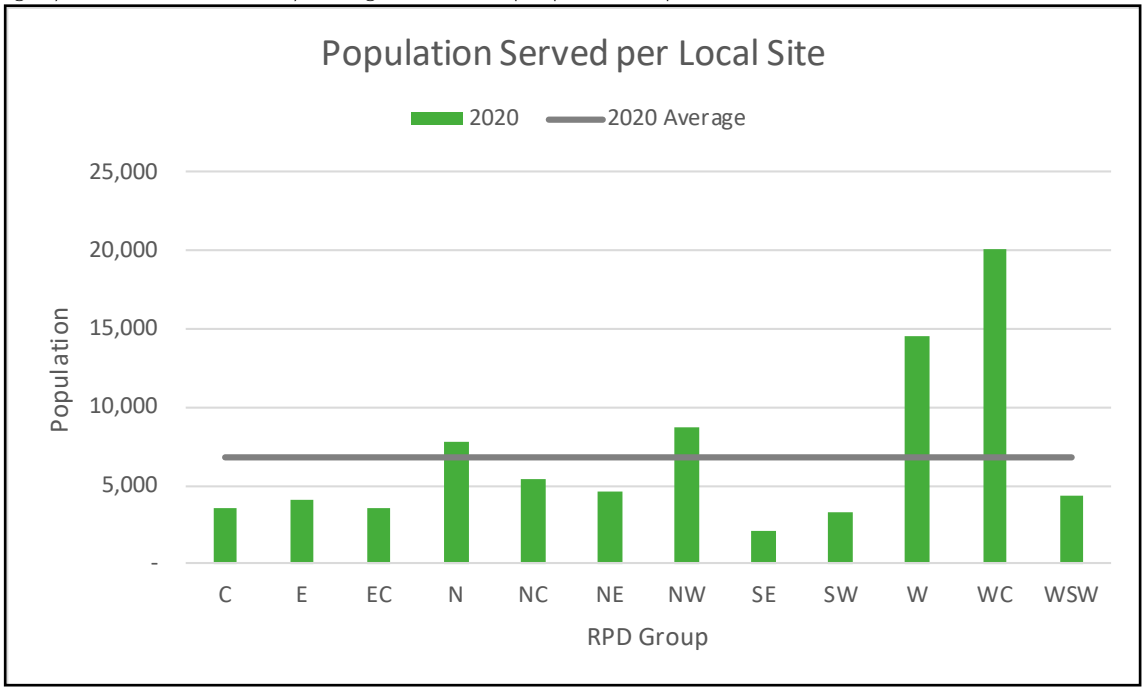


Figure 88. Population Served per Acre of Local Sites in each RPD Group

Additional Amenities

The following types of recreational facilities are not mapped, and are not included in the facility needs analyses that take place later in this chapter. Some are relatively scarce facility types, others are dependent upon the presence of a preexisting feature (e.g., a historical structure), and some are types of facilities most frequently provided by some entity other than the County.

Swimming Pools: DRP does not provide outdoors swimming pools, though two County-owned indoor swimming pools run by the YMCA are available at the Dundalk Community Center and at Randallstown Community Center. Public swimming programs are offered by a few recreation councils, and hosted at the County's community colleges. Other opportunities for pool swimming are provided by YMCA's and private swim clubs and marinas, and many citizens have constructed pools on their own property.

Golf Courses: Five public golf courses are provided for County citizens by Baltimore County Golf, functioning as part of the quasi-public Baltimore County Revenue Authority. One of the courses, Fox Hollow, also features a golf training facility. The Baltimore City-owned Pine Ridge Golf Course at Loch Raven Reservoir is likewise a public course. These public courses supplement the golfing opportunities provided by private courses and driving ranges, which are the primary providers of golf within the County.

Other Facilities: A variety of other facilities that provide recreational opportunities are provided within Baltimore County recreation sites and parks, including:

- Amphitheaters
- Community Gardens
- Disc Golf Courses
- Dog Parks
- Horseshoe Pits
- Historical and Interpretive Areas
- Model Aircraft/Car Facilities
- Fishing Ponds
- Jogging Tracks
- Sand Volleyball Courts
- Indoor Fitness Facilities

In addition to recreational facilities, a wide range of support amenities are provided at parks and recreation sites, including: access roads and parking lots, park benches, bleachers and other types of seating, comfort stations, concessions and storage buildings, drinking and ornamental fountains, fencing, security lighting, trash receptacles, and landscaped areas.

4.2 Park Equity Analysis

Baltimore County is home to a diverse population, whom the Department of Recreation and Parks aims to serve equitably, providing park space and recreational activities to communities suitable for their needs. The survey and level of service analyses provide two ways to approach this goal by providing an assessment of stated priorities and existing facilities. While the level of service analysis incorporates the total population, it does not distinguish between areas where park needs may be higher, such as among communities with low car ownership or wealth, factors that make it harder to access regional facilities. Therefore, an additional level of consideration is needed.

The Park Equity Mapper was developed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR), the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), University of Maryland Center for Geospatial Information Science (CGIS), the National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG) and University of Maryland School of Public Health Community Engagement, Environmental Justice & Health (CEEJH) lab. This model combines information on park access with data on population density, wealth, youth, and older adults, public transportation, walkability, linguistic isolation and proportion of the population that is non-white. The Park Equity Mapper is still being refined to add all parks data and create weights that most effectively assess equity.

The figure to the right shows the results of the Park Equity Mapper, where darker colors indicate a lower degree of equity. Within Baltimore County, there are significant areas rated as high equity. The areas of greatest concern are the areas that border Baltimore City, particularly to the West and Northwest, approaching Owings Mills. This area aligns well with the areas designated as Urban and as Community Conservation Areas and is primarily contained by the RPD group West Southwest, with additional portions in West, West Central, and Northwest. These are areas to consider carefully when reviewing the results of the proximity analysis.

The West Southwest RPD group performed about average or slightly better in the level of service analysis, based on number of people served per facility. The West Central performed worse than other areas in provision of ball

Table 8. Park Equity Mapper Weights

CATEGORY	WEIGHT (%)
PARK DISTANCE	18.2
% NON-WHITE	18.2
POPULATION DENSITY	9.1
INCOME	9.1
% CHILDREN <18	9.1
% ADULTS >65	9.1
LINGUISTIC ISOLATION	9.1
WALKABILITY	9.1
DISTANCE TO TRANSIT	9.1

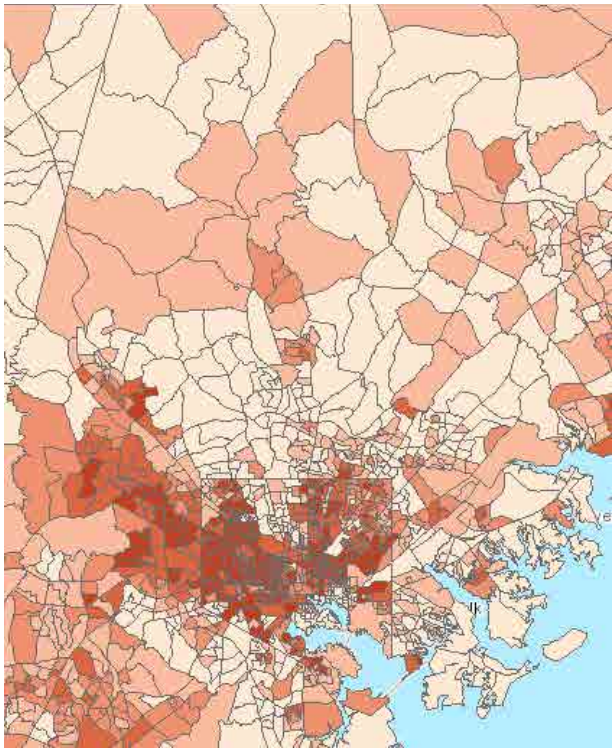


Figure 89. Park Equity Mapper Results by Census Tract

diamonds, multipurpose courts, tennis courts, and indoor recreation facilities. The West RPD group has a poor provision of trails and playgrounds compared to other areas and the Northwest RPD group had poor provision of picnic facilities. These facilities may be particularly important to provide in greater numbers due to social factors captured by the Park Equity mapper. Some areas identified as having low park equity - the West and West Central - also have low local park and open space provision. While the West Southwest was not seen as very deficient in local site acreage, the fact that it was identified as having low park equity may still justify additional investments to better serve the area. These areas may be explored for future parks and recreation facilities.

Using equal weights for all factors, Baltimore County had an overall Park Equity score of 0.23, compared with 0.26 for Maryland. Using the default weights, Baltimore County had a score of 0.19, compared with a statewide average of 0.26. This means that Baltimore County's park system is ranked as less equitable than Maryland overall.

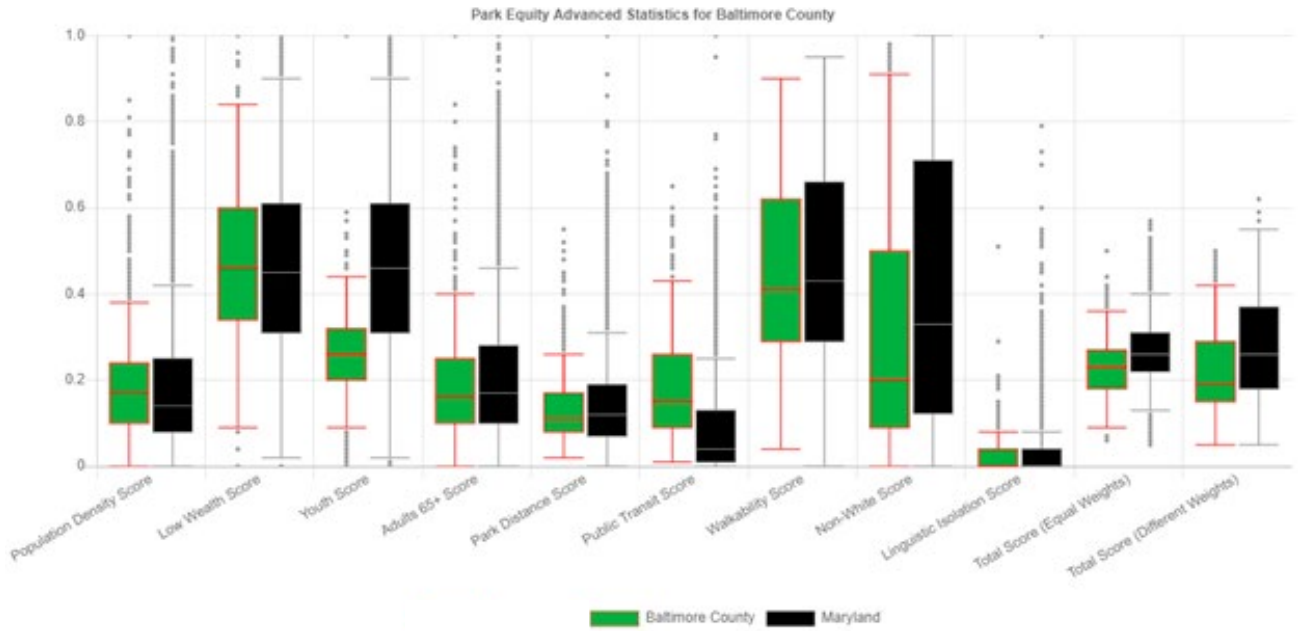


Figure 90. Park Equity of Baltimore County compared to State of Maryland

The park distance in Baltimore County was about the same as in Maryland as a whole, though there is a great degree of variation at the state level. There were several notable differences in the averages between Baltimore County and Maryland averages for factors in the model. Baltimore County has fewer youth and a smaller non-white population and has greater access to public transportation than the statewide average.

While the Park Equity Mapper deals specifically with park access, there are additional models that can be used to assess where communities may need additional resources in order to achieve equitable outcomes. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) produces a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), which is often used in emergency management to understand what communities will require the greatest resources. It incorporates social factors including poverty, lack of vehicle access, and crowded housing. Census tracts receive vulnerability ratings based on housing and transportation, minority status, household composition, and socioeconomic factors. The complete methodology is detailed on the CDC website. While not typically applied to park equity, this index can be helpful in identifying areas that may need additional attention and outreach.

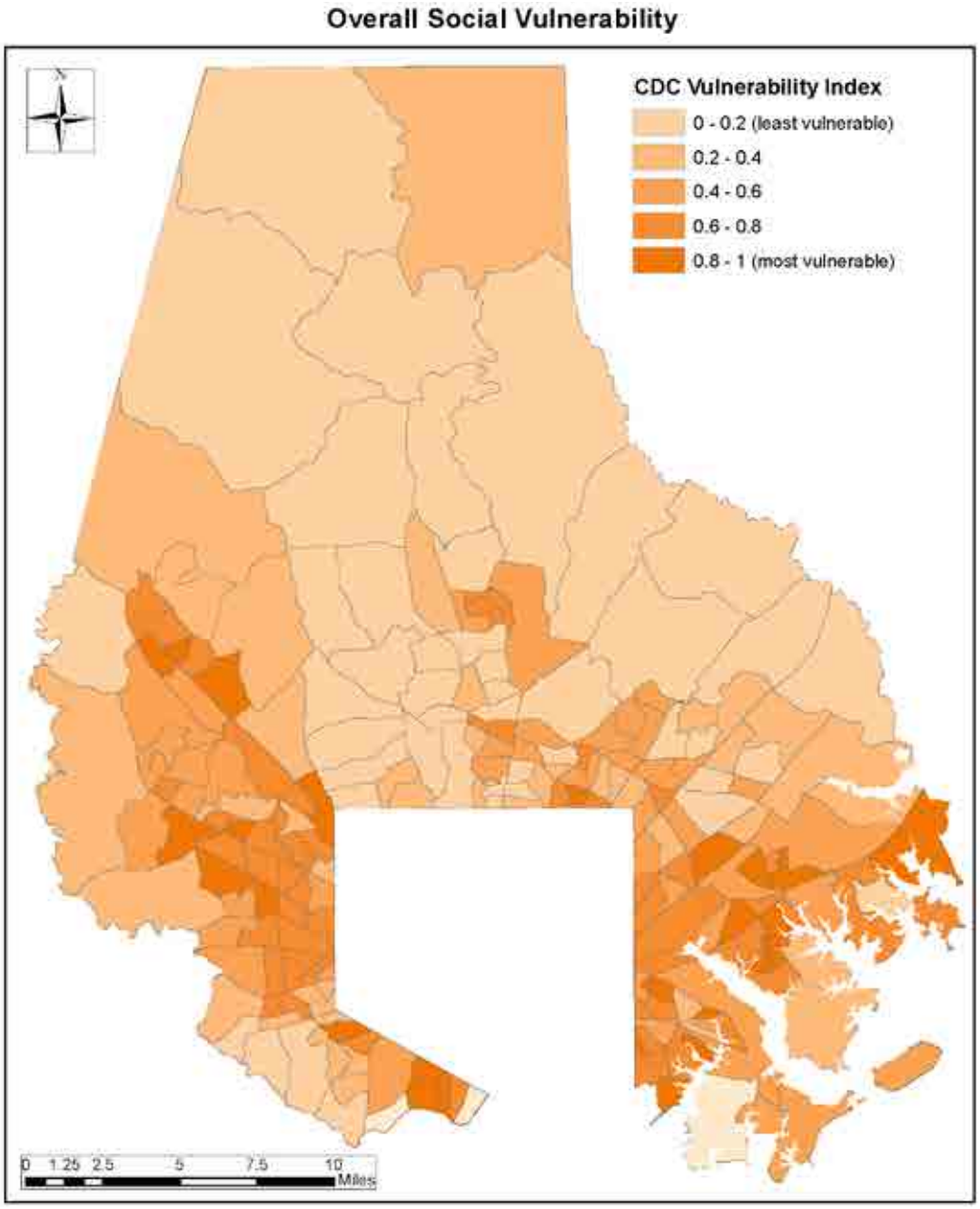


Figure 91. Overall Social Vulnerability

The geographic pattern of social vulnerability using the SVI is similar to that of the Park Equity mapper, with the areas to the east and west of Baltimore City showing the highest level of vulnerability. The two models use similar factors to determine social vulnerability, but the CDC map does not incorporate park proximity, which contributes to slightly different patterns. The area to the east of the city is relatively well served with local parks and SRCs, compared to the area to the west, and thus has better park equity, despite having factors that create higher vulnerability. These regions received relatively low survey responses, compared to the regions of the county with the lowest SVI scores.

Equity in the parks and open spaces of Baltimore County is a high priority and the LPPRP is an important part of evaluating our progress toward that goal. Measures of level of service, park equity, and social vulnerability as assessed by the CDC highlight that the areas to the west of Baltimore City, including the West Southwest and West, and parts of West Central and Northwest RPD groups. These are relatively urban areas, where it can be challenging to acquire land, but these regions could be a high priority moving forward to better provide for residents and create greater equity across the County.



CHAPTER FIVE

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 Introduction

Parks and recreational facilities greatly improve the wellbeing and quality of life of Baltimore County residents. They are important for physical and mental health, providing spaces where people can spend their leisure time. They improve environmental health, by preserving permeable surfaces and trees that reduce summer heat. And they enhance a sense of community by proving spaces to gather and programs for residents. As the County grows in population and as recreational preferences change, it is important for the County to adapt and set new goals for land acquisition, facilities creation, and maintenance. This section details the goals that Baltimore County has set based on the results of our analysis of existing facilities, community needs, and concerns of equity, as well as updates on our goals since the 2017 LPPRP.

5.2 County Goals

1. Acquire a variety of parklands and recreation sites to achieve parkland acquisition goals and meet public recreation needs.

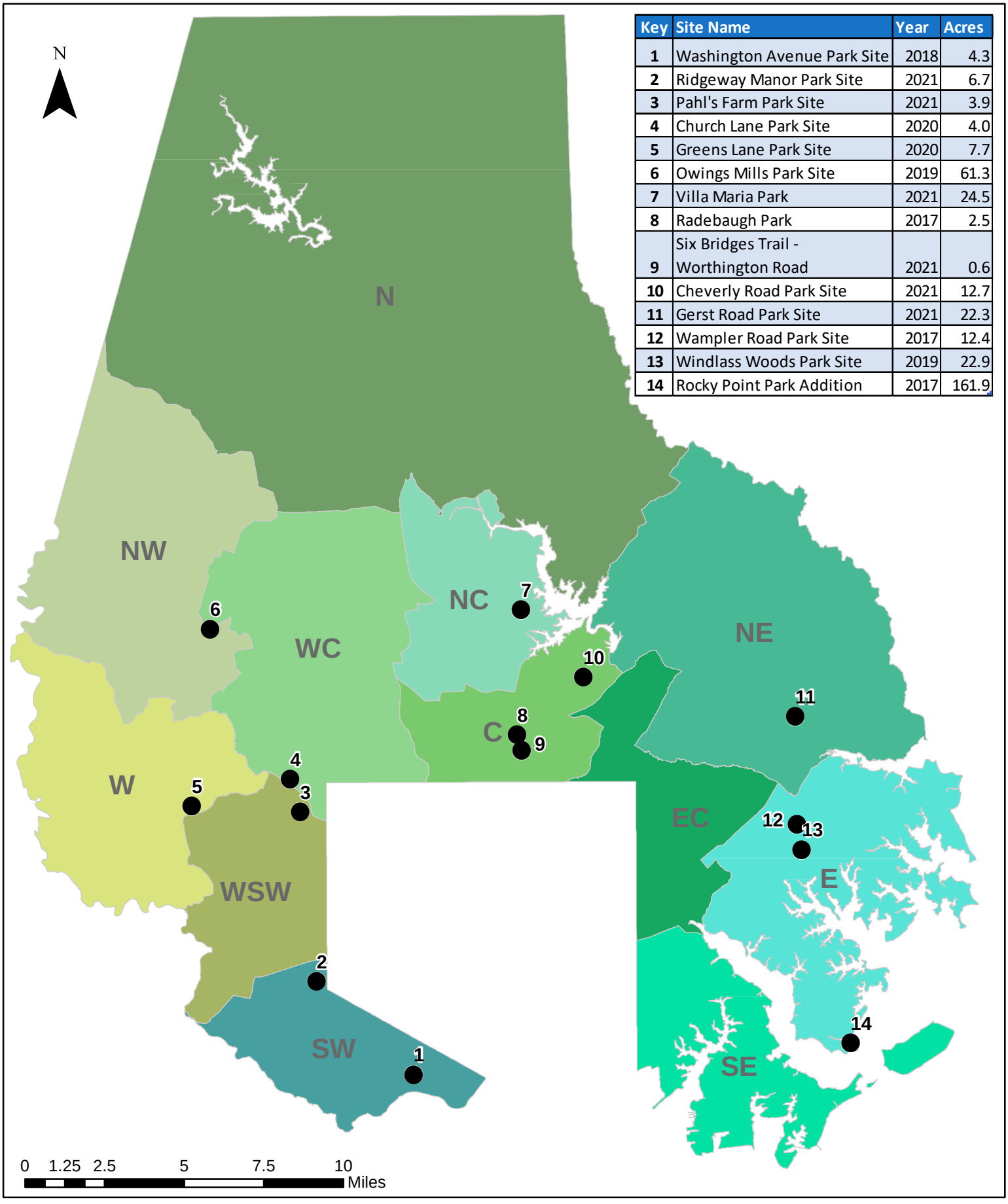
Utilize Program Open Space (POS) as a key funding source for the acquisition of parkland. Support efforts to secure the utilization of 100% of State real estate transfer tax for land preservation programs, as was the intent when the tax was enacted.

Sixteen properties were purchased for park and open space purposes in the period comprising calendar years 2017 through 2021, resulting in the acquisition of over 360 acres of land. Nearly $18.9 million in POS funding contributed to these parkland acquisitions (including pending project applications). The present County Executive and his administration have made park acquisition a high priority, resulting in six acquisitions taking place in calendar year 2021 alone, with an investment of more than $9.2 million in POS funding within those purchases. The County's outstanding share of past diversions to POS, whereby POS funding was redirected through State legislation to other uses, is nearly $3.9 million. The Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks, as well as other members of the Maryland Association of Counties Parks and Recreation Administrators (MACPRA) affiliate, remain dedicated to having the diverted POS funding restored and returned to the counties.

Strategically target available park acquisition funding resources to areas of existing and projected future needs, and to protect and preserve key environmental and natural resource lands.

Many of the County's park acquisitions over the past five years have helped to fulfill recommendations of the 2017 LPPRP, support efforts to meet existing and future recreational needs, provide additional parkland in RPD groups with lower-than average access to parklands, and/or preserve environmentally sensitive natural resources. Two properties acquired in the Towson community, along the Six Bridges Trail, support both the demand for additional green space and places to walk, jog, and cycle. Ten of the sixteen properties purchase for park and open space use are within areas that serve the RPD groups with the lowest satisfaction ratings for "availability of undeveloped open/green space" in the 2016 public survey completed for the 2017 LPPRP. Two sites acquired – the Windlass Woods Property in Middle River and the Rock Point Park addition on the Back River Peninsula – preserved nearly 100%-wooded properties and areas of wetlands. Three properties viable for community or neighborhood park development were acquired in the Bird River corridor, an area that continues to experience some of the strongest population growth in the County. The 61+ acre Gwynnbrook Property in Owings Mills provides another park site in an area that has experienced significant residential growth over the past several decades.

Acquisitions: January 2017 - January 2022



Key	Site Name	Year	Acres
1	Washington Avenue Park Site	2018	4.3
2	Ridgeway Manor Park Site	2021	6.7
3	Pahl's Farm Park Site	2021	3.9
4	Church Lane Park Site	2020	4.0
5	Greens Lane Park Site	2020	7.7
6	Owings Mills Park Site	2019	61.3
7	Villa Maria Park	2021	24.5
8	Radebaugh Park	2017	2.5
9	Six Bridges Trail - Worthington Road	2021	0.6
10	Cheverly Road Park Site	2021	12.7
11	Gerst Road Park Site	2021	22.3
12	Wampler Road Park Site	2017	12.4
13	Windlass Woods Park Site	2019	22.9
14	Rocky Point Park Addition	2017	161.9

Figure 92. Acquisitions: January 2017 - January 2022

Employ the Baltimore County development process to provide quality local open space, obtain fees-in-lieu where appropriate (to help fund park acquisition and development), and to secure vital greenway connections.

A total of nine local open space dedications to the County took place within fiscal years 2017 through 2021, involving just under nineteen acres of land (does not count greenway dedications, reported later in this section).

Work cooperatively with partner agencies to provide additional parks, recreation sites, and green spaces for the use of the citizenry.

One additional public school recreation center, Honeygo Elementary School Recreation Center, was constructed and opened since the formulation of the prior LPPRP. Additionally, leases have been extended or are in the process of being extended at sites such as Wilson Point Park (partially leased from Maryland Aviation Administration), Campus Hills Park (State Highways Administration), and Kingsville and Millers Island Parks (Maryland Department of Natural Resources).



Exercise all means necessary for the acquisition of key prospective park sites, up to and including the powers of master plan conflict and condemnation.

While it has not been necessary to use the power of condemnation in more than a decade, a more aggressive approach has been taken within the park acquisition program. In multiple instances, properties acquired were proposed for development, and the County was able to instead broker agreements for site acquisition for parks and open space purposes.

Pursue other avenues for the acquisition of parkland and green space, such as land donations, cooperative ventures with non-profits and other organizations with similar missions, recreation site leases and access easements, and tax sale opportunities.

One land donation, involving a residential property that was donated to provide the main access for the Radebaugh Park Site in Towson, was added to the County's park inventory. Multiple lease extensions, securing continued access to recreational amenities on State and private properties, were executed since the time of the 2017 LPPRP. DRP and Baltimore County continue to support the efforts of the non-proft conservation organization NeighborSpace of Baltimore County through both funding support, and cooperative agreements associated with green spaces in the urban portion of the County's Urban – Rural Demarcation Line (URDL).

2. Develop, enhance, and rehabilitate parks to meet the recreational needs and demands of citizens of all ages and abilities, to attract visitors, and to support the organized recreation programs of the partner recreation and parks councils.

Provide a sufficient quantity of traditional outdoor recreation facilities such as ball diamonds, athletic fields, sports courts, playgrounds and picnic areas.

The development of Radebaugh Park was the first new park project since the 2017 LPPRP. The majority of non-acquisition capital resources over the past five years have been invested within critical park and facility renovation programs, as well as a number of facility upgrades and replacement programs. Seven synthetic turf fields have been constructed in place of existing work grass athletic fields, better allowing the fields to meet the recreational needs of County residents.

Provide sufficient indoor facilities to meet expanding demands for year-round recreation, to serve recreation council programs that require indoor space, and to facilitate use by community and civic organizations.

One indoor recreation facility, the indoor equestrian arena at the Baltimore County Agricultural Resource Center and Farm Park, was constructed since the time of the 2017 LPPRP. Three community center design jobs are presently underway, each with designs that expand upon previously developed facilities, which will thereby allow them to better meet recreational demands.



Construct additional trails and paths to meet growing demands for linear-based recreation (walking, jogging, bicycling, etc.), and work with County and State agencies to establish pedestrian and bicycle connections between parks, residential areas and other points of interest.

No new trails were constructed at County parks within the past five years. A number of trail and path renovation projects have been completed or are underway, including a significant trail renovation project at the Milford Mill Trail (presently under design). Additional segments of the Northeast Trail, a multi-use paved side path along Perry Hall Boulevard have been constructed by developers of residential subdivisions along that corridor, with another segment proposed as part of an upcoming subdivision. The non-profit organization Catonsville Rails-to-Trails has constructed additional segments of trail along the Catonsville Short Line Trail, through a license agreement with the County. The Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) has also worked on sidewalk, path, and bicycle lane and infrastructure improvements to help enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity.

Provide new types of recreational facilities, where appropriate, and where sufficient demand has been expressed by County citizens.

Indoor and outdoor equestrian arenas were constructed at the Baltimore County Agricultural Resource Center and Farm Park, providing the County's first dedicated public equestrian facilities. Design is presently underway for the County's second concrete skate park, to be situated in the Rosedale community of eastern Baltimore County, and strategically situated to complement the Sandy Hills Skate Park in Lansdowne, one of the oldest and most esteemed skate parks in the United States. Finally, the demand for pickleball courts has increased immensely in recent years, and resulted in DRP having tennis court lines added at twenty outdoor and indoor sports court sites, and converting one set of courts to dedicated (pickleball only) courts.



Seek out opportunities to provide recreational facilities through the local open space and greenway regulations of the County's development process, and utilize LOS waiver fees to support capital development and enhancement projects.

As indicated in the trails progress summary, additional segments of the Northeast Trail, along the edge of Perry Hall Boulevard have been constructed through development agreements. Another essential segment of that trail will be developed within an upcoming residential subdivision. Dedicated funds deriving from Planned Unit Development (PUD) Resolutions contributed to improvements at Towson Manor Park (a specific public request listed in the 2017 LPPRP), walkway construction at Southland Hills Park and Soukup Arena, comfort station construction at Angel Park, synthetic turf field construction at Milford Mill Academy School Recreation Center, and screening plantings at Gough Park. More than one million dollars in LOS waiver fee revenues have been dedicated to a variety of capital jobs over the past five years, ranging from park acquisitions, to synthetic turf field construction, to playground replacements, to new park development at Radebaugh Park, to various park improvements at multiple sites.



Renovate, rehabilitate, and enhance parks and recreational facilities to address issues such as facility aging and wear, outdated recreational infrastructure, and changes in recreational demands.

A significant annual investment continues to be made within assorted ongoing park and facility renovation programs, such as those for sports courts, playgrounds, and ball diamonds and athletic fields (and associated backstops, safety fences, and player benches). The DRP FY22 capital budget included $4.4 million for such programs. More than $2.4 million was also invested in individual facility renovation jobs within the past five years, funding a wide variety of work including recreation structure renovations, correction of drainage and erosion issues, pedestrian bridge repairs, fishing pier renovations, utility system repairs, and more.



Continue to invest in older, established communities, and support community revitalization programs and initiatives.

Increased park and recreation equity, including access to parks, recreational facilities, and recreation programs/opportunities, is a key objective of the County and agency administrations, as well as the County's Strategic Enterprise Plan. The Greens Lane property acquisition was completed in response to resident demands for more parks and green space, voiced as part of the Liberty Road Corridor Study. Numerous other park acquisitions took place within designated Sustainable Communities, helping to fulfill park and recreation related recommendations in the associated Sustainable Community plans. A new Local Park Comprehensive Enhancement Program was created within the DRP FY22 capital budget for the purpose of renovating and enhancing older community and neighborhood parks, the vast majority of which are situated in older, established communities.

3. Enhance public access to the natural environment, including the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and seek to increase public knowledge of and appreciation for nature.

Provide an assortment of recreational facilities at the County's waterfront parks, ranging from water-specific facilities such as boat ramps, fishing piers, and canoe/kayak launches, to general amenities including picnic pavilions, playgrounds and paths.

An additional pier was constructed at Cox's Point Park, in conjunction with a shoreline restoration – living shoreline project that took place at that park. Design of a pavilion for nature program and general use is underway at Marshy Point Park and Nature Center. Also under planning and/or design are boat ramp replacement and canoe/kayak launch construction at Merritt Point Park, playground replacements at Cox's Point and Watersedge Park, and pavilion and pier renovations and path extensions at Fleming Park.

Utilize the County's interpretive centers to not only provide recreational opportunities, but to help educate visitors about the natural environment.

The County's five major interpretive centers – nature centers at Oregon Ridge, Marshy Point, and Cromwell Valley Parks, the historical museum at Banneker Historical Parks, and the agricultural center at the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park – continue to improve their facilities and programs, each helping to provide a better appreciation and knowledge of the natural environment.



Continue to procure greenway reservations and easement through the County's development process or other means such as purchase, and – where appropriate – make improvements such as trails within the greenways.

Twelve land parcels were acquired without cost through the County's greenways program, preserving over 42 acres of land along greenways including Red Run, Stemmers Run, and Honeygo Run. Early stage discussions on developing strategies for creating minimal impact trails and paths within greenways and other environmentally sensitive lands, through cooperative planning with EPS and other County agencies, are underway.

4. Work with Baltimore County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS) to improve environmental conditions at the County's parks and recreation sites, and to help protect and preserve the natural environment.



Work with Baltimore County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS) to improve water quality, protect tidal areas and public waterfront lands and facilities, and make progress towards Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas associated mandates.

DRP and EPS continue to work together on park-based improvements that improve water quality, help to reduce flooding problems, protect parklands, and earn credits towards Critical Areas mandates. Such projects as stream restoration, shoreline restoration, and tree/forest plantings continue to take place, where appropriate, on County parkland. Completed or underway (in design) restoration jobs include stream work at Overlook, West Hills, and Hammershire Parks, and shoreline work at Cox's Point, Watersedge, Chesterwood, and Rocky Point Parks.

Work with Baltimore County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS) to expand and improve the health of forest resources within parks and other recreation sites.

While some relatively small scale forest planting projects have occurred, and forest management plans have been created for parks, the lack of a substantial funding stream has largely limited the County's and agency's ability to implement plans. Volunteer groups, including multiple park councils, have performed volunteer work such as limited invasive vegetation eradication.

5. Pursue alternative means for providing recreational opportunities through partnerships with other agencies and organizations.

Aggressively pursue grant opportunities.



In addition to Program Open Space (POS) grants, the County and DRP have successfully secured and utilized significant grant funding through a number of other sources. More than $6.1 million in State of Maryland funding has been secured through 23 individual capital grants and bond bills. This funding contributed to park development and enhancements at both parks and school recreation centers. Examples of funded projects include synthetic turf fields at Perry Hall High School Recreation Center (SRC), New Town High SRC, and Pikesville High SRC, park renovation and enhancement jobs at Double Rock Park and Linover Park, and new park design and construction (including underway jobs) at Radebaugh Park, Hazelwood Park, and the Sparrows Point Park Site. Finally, DRP received its first State and Federal waterways and boating funding in more than a decade, securing nearly $900,000 in funding support for the replacement of the Merritt Point Park two-lane boat ramp, and construction of a soft launch for kayaks, canoes, and other paddle-driven watercraft.

Solicit businesses and citizens for donations, enabling them to contribute to the quality of life in the jurisdiction in which they live and do business.

While the rules associated with soliciting donations have been tightened up in the County, outside parties have contributed funding for a number of projects that are completed or underway. These include the Baltimore Ravens' donation of $500,000 towards a themed destination playground and challenge course at Northwest Regional Park, recreation council and advocate donations for smaller scale jobs at Hannah More Park's dog park, the outdoor equestrian ring at the County's Agricultural Resource Center and Farm Park, and a sign replacement at Parkville Center. Additional recreation council donations are anticipated for a number of other underway capital projects.

Enter into appropriate manage-lease agreements to provide citizens with recreational opportunities that are outside the scope of what may feasibly be offered by the County.

No new lease agreements have been executed since the writing of the 2017 LPPRP. However, a number of leases have been or are in the process of being amended or extended, including those associated with Cromwell Valley Park, Millers Island Park, Wilson Point Park, Sandy Hills Park, and Kingsville Park.

Continue to work cooperatively with Baltimore County Public Schools and the Board of Education through the long established joint-use agreement to provide recreational opportunities at all public school recreation centers with recreational facilities.

The joint-use agreement continues to be an essential component of the County's public recreation delivery model. One additional school recreation center, Honeygo Elementary School Recreation Center, has been constructed since the prior LPPRP, on a previously POS-funded site that was made available after a POS conversion was approved. Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) has, in a number of cases, coordinated with DRP on large scale school replacement projects, seeking to minimize adverse impacts on recreational facilities both indoors and outdoors. Additionally, BCPS and DRP are presently working together to enable the extension of the Catonsville Short Line Trail through the edge of the Catonsville Elementary School Recreation Center property.



Work with the Baltimore County Police Department to combine resources to staff and operate Police Athletic League (PAL) Centers, complementing recreational opportunities offered through the traditional programs of local recreation councils.

The PAL recreation center model has changed over the years, with a gradual decline in active Police Department involvement. DRP is presently working on revised concept that offers youth – particularly in communities of high social vulnerability – expanded access to enriching recreational opportunities. Center hours have been expanded, and two new centers with larger structural footprints including multipurpose gymnasiums with stages, are presently under design for the Middle River and Rosedale communities.

6. Expand opportunities for citizens to participate in and experience arts and cultural programs and events, and work to preserve historically and culturally significant sites for the appreciation and enjoyment of County citizens and visitors.

Rehabilitate and upgrade the County's arts facilities.

Limited facility renovation/enhancement jobs have taken place at Oregon Ridge Park's concert shell, North Point Government Center's auditorium, and the Lurman Woodland Theater stage at Catonsville High School Recreation Center. A planned park improvement project at Holt Park and Center for the Arts will likely result in enhancements to the existing small amphitheater at the park.

Provide additional strategically sited venues for the arts throughout the County.

No new arts venues have been developed, though DRP has recently initiated a program that will incorporate public art features into new park development and park enhancement projects.

Provide arts and cultural programs and special events at local, regional and countywide levels.

A wide range of arts and cultural programs and events are offered through DRP, including those provided by staff at the County's interpretive centers in cooperation with park councils ("Juneteenth" at Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum being an example), to special events hosted at County parks by recreation and parks councils and outside groups, or through partnerships (concerts at Lurman Woodland Theater, Oregon Ridge Park, Hannah More Park, and other parks; festivals at Patriot Plaza at the Towson Courts plaza, Dundalk Heritage Park, countywide and regional parks, and other parks; and a variety of ongoing arts programs offered through recreation councils). Programming at Holt Park and Center for the Arts has been significantly expanded since 2017, combining art and nature in many of their offerings. The Sky is the Limit theater program, run through DRP's Therapeutic Recreation Office, recently marked thirty years since its inception.



Help protect sites of cultural and historical significance, and provide applicable interpretive facilities, displays and programs.

Since the time of the writing of the 2017 LPPRP, renovations to the replica cabin and gardens at Banneker Historical Park and Museum have taken place. Interpretive facility enhancements and renovations have likewise been completed at parks such as Oregon Ridge Nature Center (which includes historical buildings and resources associated with the property's industrial heritage as a mining site), Cromwell Valley Park, and Marshy Point Park. A cannon refurbishment project was completed at Fort Howard Park, and ongoing renovations and improvements are taking place at Battle Acre Park, a historical site associated with the Battle of North Point.

7. Continue to partner with affiliated citizen organizations, and participate in various partnerships in an effort to enhance public recreation access for Baltimore County citizens and visitors.

Partner with the volunteer-based recreation and parks councils to provide quality recreational opportunities.

A number of recreation councils have disbanded or been decertified over the past five years, resulting in the consolidation of their associated service areas with those of remaining councils. In some circumstances, the councils are struggling with volunteer recruitment, and have experienced often related decreases in program registration, as well as program elimination. DRP continues to work with the remaining recreation and parks councils to ensure that quality organized recreational opportunities are available to all County residents, in a safe and welcoming manner. Efforts are also underway to create more agency-driven programs and recreational opportunities, particularly in communities with struggling recreation councils, and/or underserved populations.

Utilize the Board of Recreation and Parks as an integral link between the citizens of Baltimore County, the recreation and parks councils, the County Council, and DRP.

The Board of Recreation and Parks continues to function as an essential appointed entity that has helped to support efforts to establish and enforce standards and rules that apply to the recreation and parks councils.

Participate in committees, workgroups, and other partnership opportunities that may result in enhanced public recreation access.

DRP regularly participates in various partnerships, committees, workgroups, and the like. Some examples in recent years include a cooperative venture with Baltimore County Public Libraries to create "storybook trails" at various parks, a pending agreement with the Ripken Foundation to build a synthetic turf field at a County park, and participating in multi-agency planning efforts such as the County Master Plan, Sustainable Communities Plans, and the Liberty Road Corridor Study. The agency has a "technical advisor" seat on the County's Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC), and will soon be working with Baltimore City on a connectivity study aimed at better connecting City and County parks and trails.



5.3 State Goals

The State of Maryland has set goals for land preservation, parks and recreation, including:

- Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily accessible to all of its citizens and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.
- Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make communities, counties and the State more desirable places to live, work, play and visit.
- Use state investment in parks, recreation and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local comprehensive / master plans.
- To the greatest degree feasible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile and help to protect natural open spaces and resources.
- Complement infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth through investment in neighborhood and community parks and facilities.
- Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands at a rate that equals or exceeds the rate that land is developed at a statewide level.

5.4 Priorities by RPD Group

While there are overarching goals for recreation and parks for Baltimore County and the State of Maryland, there is also a need to analyze priorities at a finer spatial scale, recognizing differences in existing amenities, population density, recreation preferences, and stated desires of residents. Below, results of the analysis performed in Chapters 3 and 4, Measuring Demand and Level of Service, are presented by RPD Group.

For each RPD Group, there is a figure representing the responses to the survey question, "Choose up to five types of public parks or recreational facilities that you'd like to have provided at a level greater than is presently available. If you believe that none are needed, please select "none" at the end of the list of facilities." This question had 33 possible selections including "none" or "other" but only the top 10 selected amenities are displayed in the figures.

There is also a figure for each RPD Group representing the responses to the survey question, "If you were given $100 to spend on Baltimore County's park system, how would you budget it? Please fill in dollar amounts, totaling $100." There were nine possible responses and all of them are displayed.

The presentation of survey results is followed by a list of specific improvements requested by residents and staff members to specific parks and recreation facilities in each RPD group.

Central RPD Group

The Central RPD Group lies within the URDL and is densely populated, with the fewest athletic fields per capita in the county. It is the third worst served in terms of neighborhood and community parks per capita, though it does contain the nearly 450-acre Lake Roland Park and the 455-acre Cromwell Valley Park. The Park Equity Mapper identifies this region as an area of high park equity.

This region had the third highest response rate for the survey, with residents primarily expressing an interest in greater amenities for non-organized recreation including bicycling and walking. Residents also commonly chose undeveloped green spaces and open grassy areas as desired amenities, reflecting the relatively low amount of open space in this densely populated area. Residents are also interested in additional pickleball courts, reflecting a countywide trend. In survey comments, residents expressed an overall interest in additional greenspace and playing fields, especially with lights and turf.

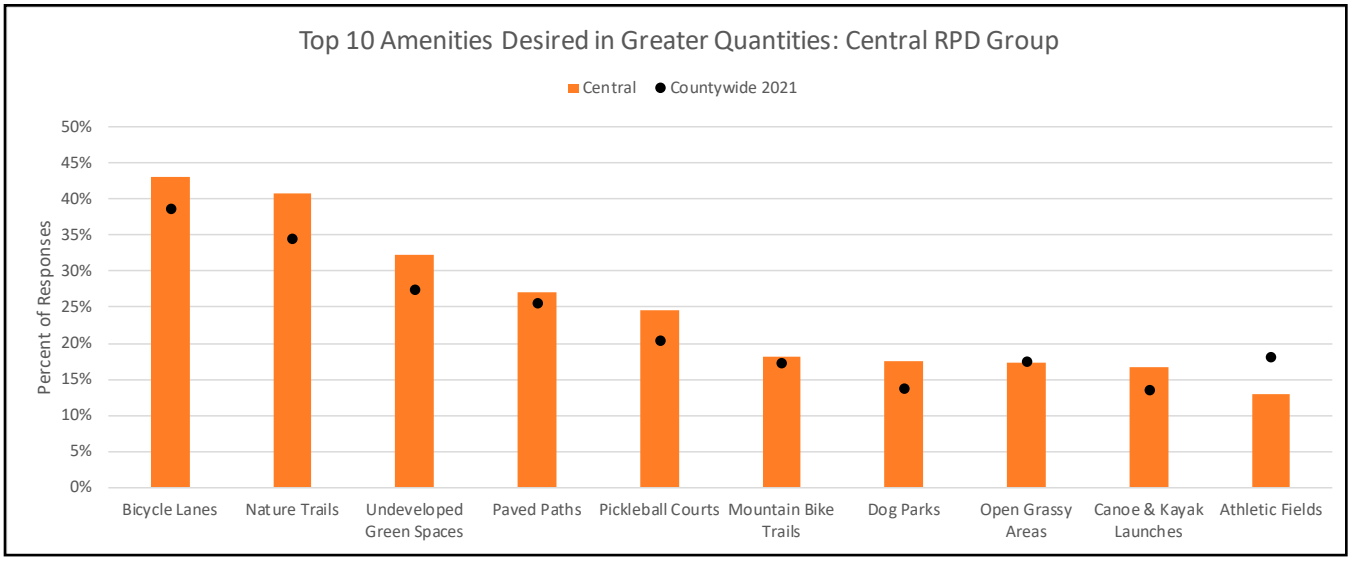


Figure 93. Top 10 Amenities Desired, Central RPD Group

Reflecting the low amount of neighborhood and community parks, respondents from the Central RPD group put the greatest amount of money toward park acquisition in their hypothetical budget. They also allocated an above average amount to Green and Open Space. Other popular categories were maintenance and repair and diverse recreational facilities.

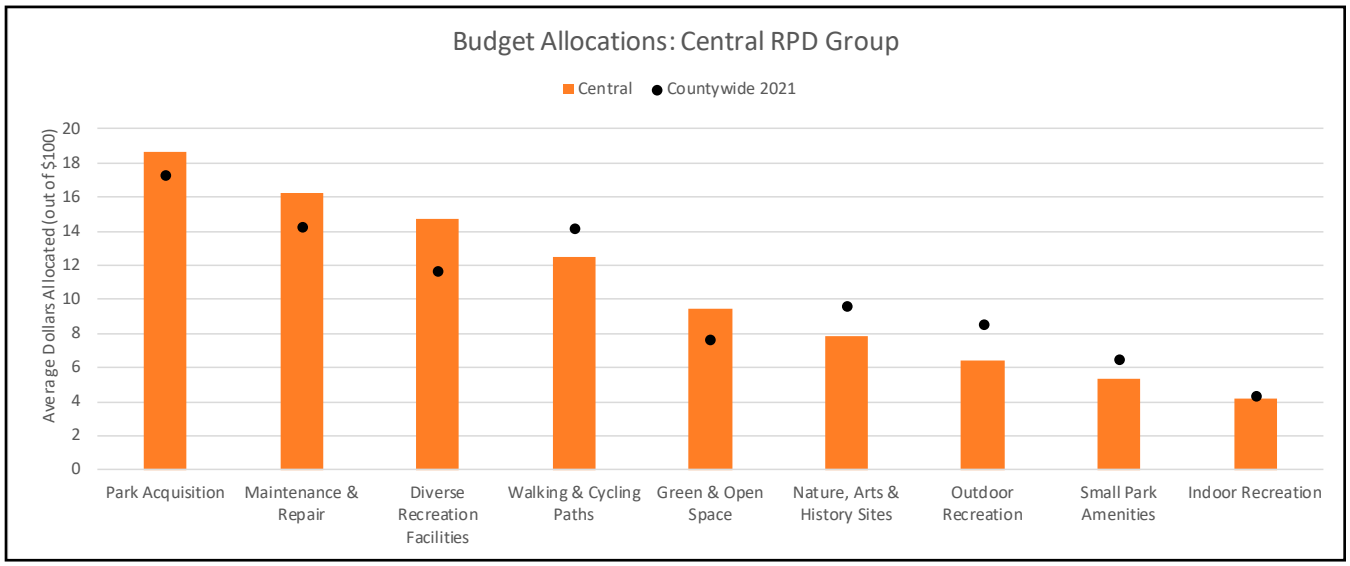


Figure 94. Budget Allocations, Central RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Cromwell Valley Park**: Trail improvements and erosion control
- **Forge Park**: Line tennis courts for pickleball
- **Glendale Park:** Line tennis courts for pickleball or create dedicated pickleball courts
- **Hillendale PAL Center**: Replace gym floor; lighting on outdoor basketball court
- **Idlewylde/Idlewood Park**: Additional tree plantings
- **Lake Roland Park**: Trail improvements and drainage; new path next to light trail tracks; add ADA accessible canoe/kayak launch
- **Loch Raven Center**: Replace gym floor; install air conditioning; make stage ADA accessible
- **Overlook Park**: Additional tree plantings

East RPD Group

The East RPD Group is less densely populated than many areas of Baltimore County, but is anticipated to see among the highest growth rates in the next 10 years. Comments from the planning process for MP 2030 indicated that residents are interested in having more small recreation parks, rather than a large regional facility.

This RPD Group received fewer than 100 survey responses. While responses from the East RPD Group reflected countywide trends, with the greatest interest in bicycle lanes, nature trails, and undeveloped open spaces, there were some unique popular responses. Residents wanted canoe and kayak launches much more strongly than residents of other areas in the county and were also above the average for requesting athletic fields, dog parks, nature centers, indoor sports fields, and indoor arts facilities. The East RPD group is coastal, with several waterfront parks, making canoe and kayak launches more feasible and more desired.

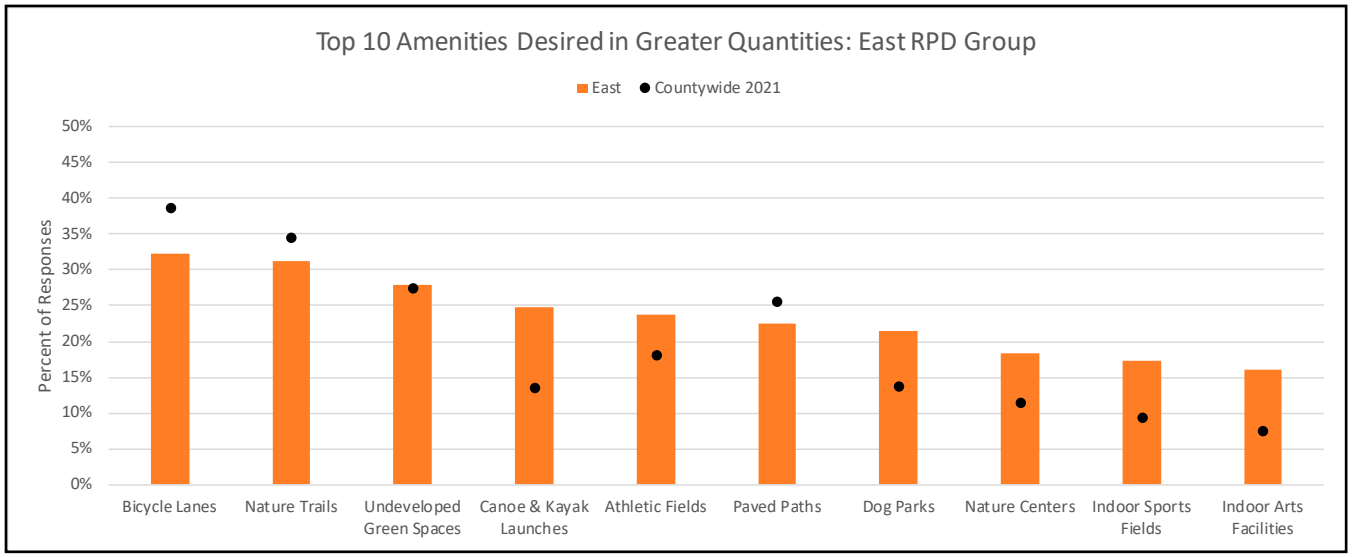


Figure 95. Top 10 Amenities Desired, East RPD Group

Compared to the rest of the county, residents of the East RPD group allocated more funds in their hypothetical budget to maintenance and repair and outdoor recreation, while allocating less than the countywide average to park acquisition and diverse recreational facilities. The need for maintenance and repairs is reflected in the requested park improvements below, which detail several parks where amenities are in need of upgrades.

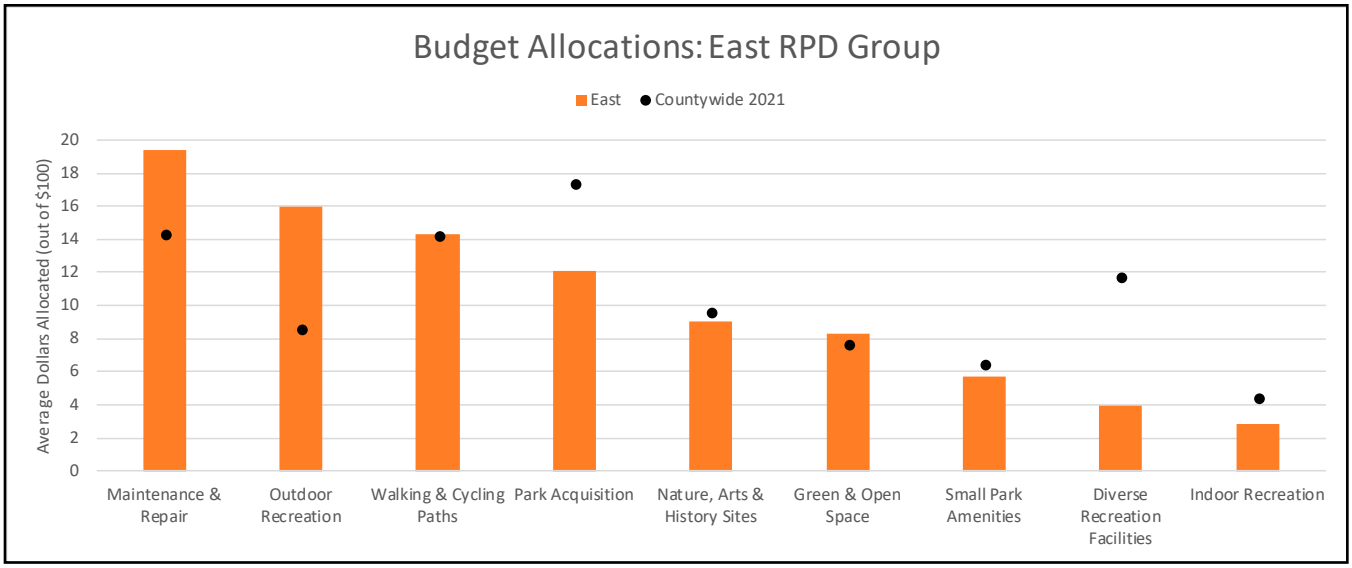


Figure 96. Budget Allocations, East RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Cox's Point Park**: Refurbish buildings, ramps, and piers; replace playground
- **Eastern Regional Park**: Extend path past baseball fields to make walking loop
- **Hawthorne/Midthorne Park**: Replace playground
- **Mars Estates PAL Center**: Widen path to PAL Center
- **Marshy Point Park**: Connect to East County Regional Greenway Trail; improve dock and kayak launch; add pollinator gardens
- **Miami Beach Park**: Repair existing boardwalk and add boardwalk to frequently flooded trails
- **Middle River Middle School Recreation Center**: Renovate comfort station
- **Rocky Point Park**: Renovate comfort station to make accessible and more functional; add ADA accessible kayak launch
- **Victory Villa Community Center**: General renovations and refurbishment
- **Victory Villa Elementary School Recreation Center**: Repaint parking lot and add security lighting

East Central RPD Group

The East Central RPD Group is among the most densely populated in Baltimore County and is anticipated to have among the highest population growth in the next ten years. The level of service analysis showed that it has a roughly average amount of recreational amenities, including sports facilities, trails, and open space.

The most requested amenity in the survey was nature trails. This RPD Group also showed an above average desire for canoe and kayak launches and fishing areas. While there is only a small waterfront area contained within this RPD Group, it is near the Southeast and East RPD Groups, both of which have long shorelines suitable for these activities.

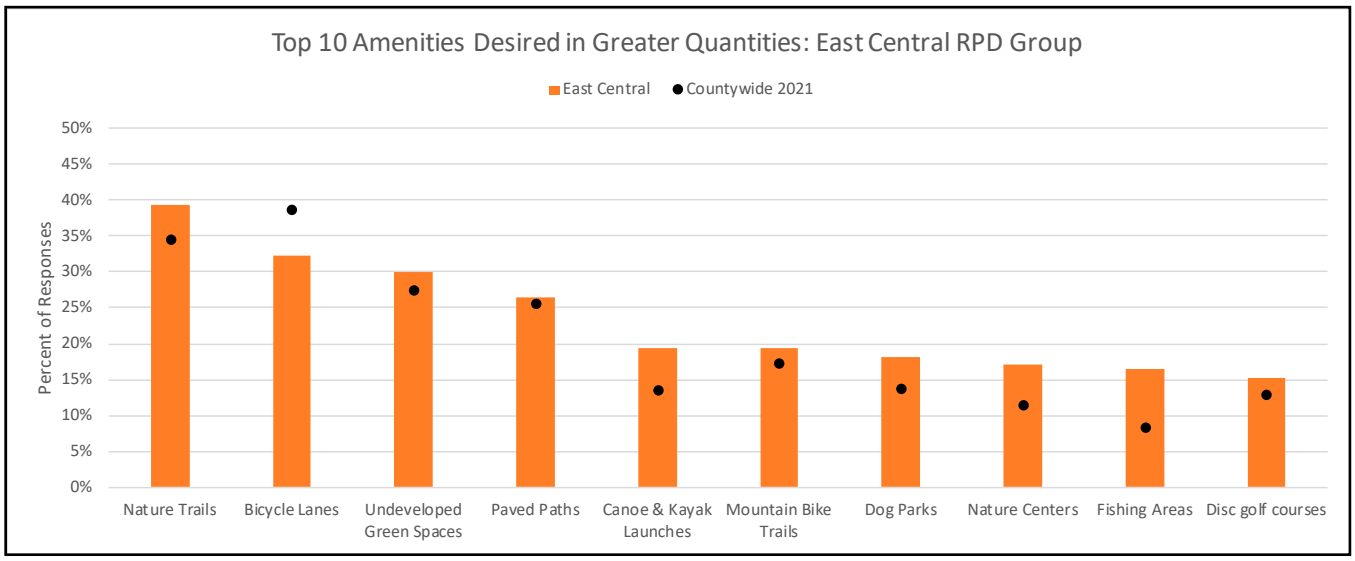


Figure 97. Top 10 Amenities Desired, East Central RPD Group

The hypothetical budget allocations of the East Central RPD Group generally reflected countywide averages, with park acquisition, maintenance and repair, and walking and cycling paths receiving the highest allocations. There was a greater than average interest in nature, arts, and history sites and a lower interest in diverse recreational facilities.

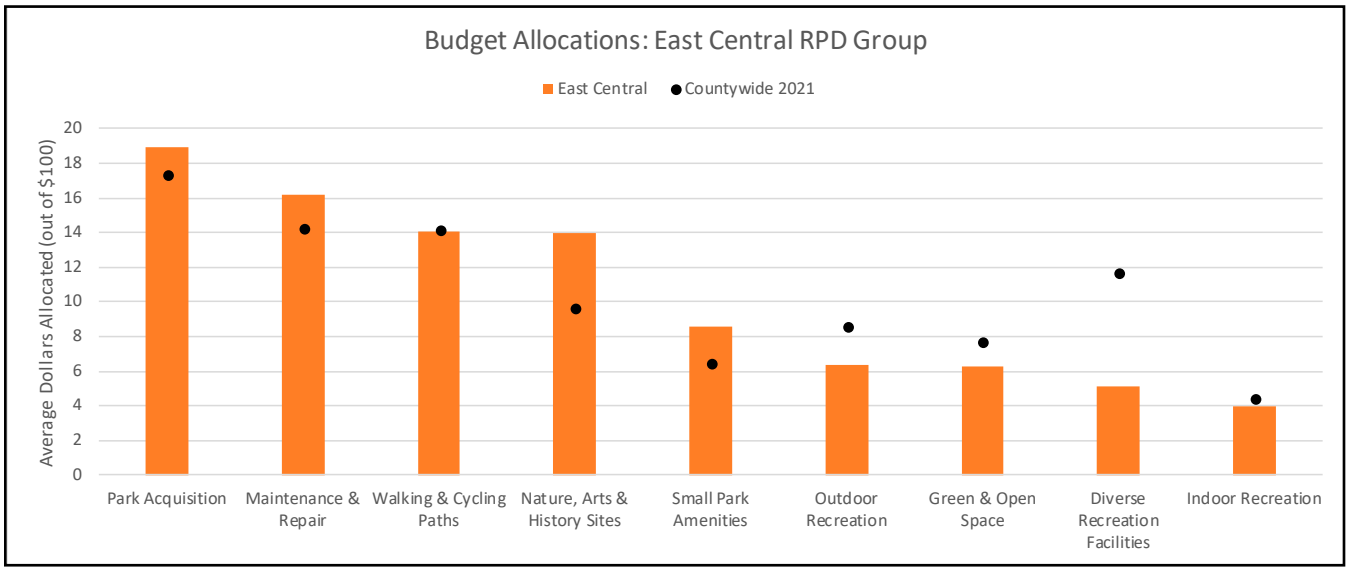


Figure 98. Budget Allocations, East Central RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Belmar Park**: Add walking path; line multipurpose courts for pickleball and add baskets; expand parking
- **Double Rock Park**: Add 1-mile paved walking path; additional tree plantings; improve pavilions
- **Golden Ring Park**: General maintenance and updates
- **Holt Park**: Expand parking and connect trails to Overlea High School
- **Linover Park**: Add parking; Add lighting to athletic fields; convert field to turf
- **Parkville High School Recreation Center**: Line multipurpose court for pickleball
- **Parkville Middle School Recreation Center:** Make stage ADA accessible
- **Pine Grove Elementary School Recreation Center**: Expand disc golf course
- **Putty Hill Park**: Remove comfort station and add parking; make baseball field accessible
- **Northeast Regional Recreation Center**: Add lights and a sidewalk to parking lot for increased safety
- **Shady Spring PAL Center**: Create educational kitchen; lighting on outdoor courts

North RPD Group

The North RPD Group is the least densely populated area of Baltimore County. Residents rated the availability, condition, and diversity of recreational activities around the average for the county and rated the amount of undeveloped open space the highest for the county. There are many agricultural and conservation easements in this region of the county, likely contributing to this rating. The North RPD Group has an about average provision of most recreational amenities for the county. However, because the region is geographically large, many people do not have access to these facilities within a one, or even three, miles. The North RPD Group is the worst served in terms of playgrounds per capita.

Unsurprisingly, given its rural nature, the North RPD Group registered a lower than average interest in undeveloped greenspace than the countywide average. More developed amenities, like athletic fields and indoor sports fields, were desired in greater quantities. While School Recreation Centers and some local parks do provide these amenities, many residents likely have to travel a significant distance to access them.

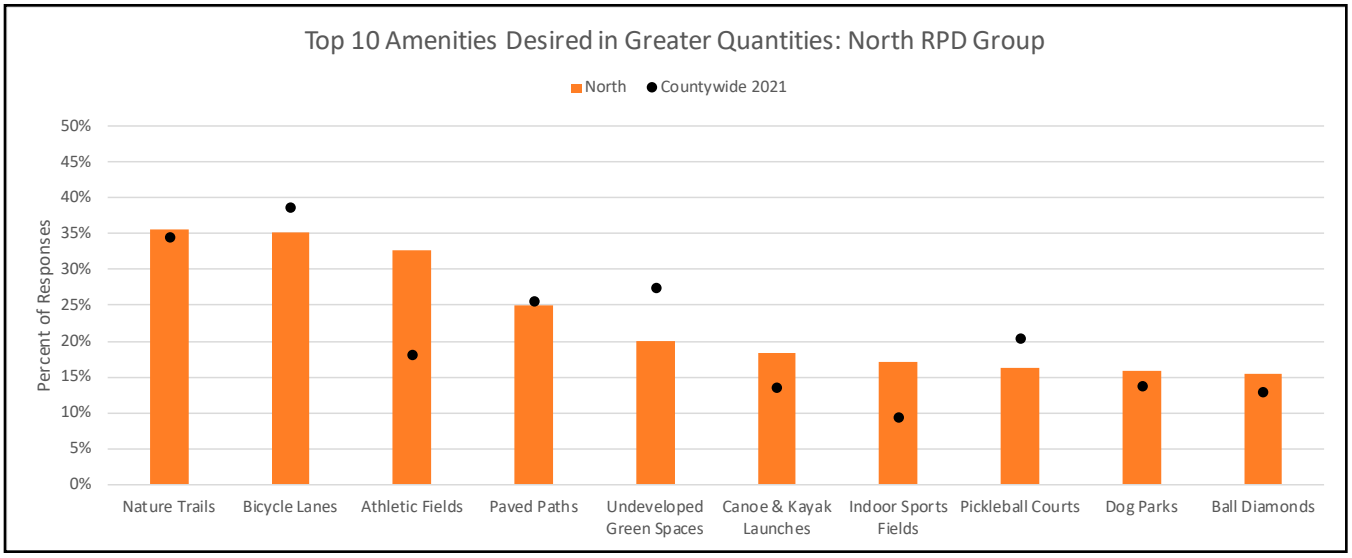


Figure 99. Top 10 Amenities Desired, North RPD Group

Residents of the North RPD Group allocated the greatest funds in their hypothetical budget to park acquisition and walking and cycling paths. They allocated a greater than average amount to diverse recreation facilities, which were enumerated in the survey as "dog parks, skateboard parks, community gardens and disc golf courses." Although the North RPD Group, the least populated in the county, has a significant amount of undeveloped land and some traditional outdoor recreation facilities, it has few amenities that could be classified as diverse recreation facilities.

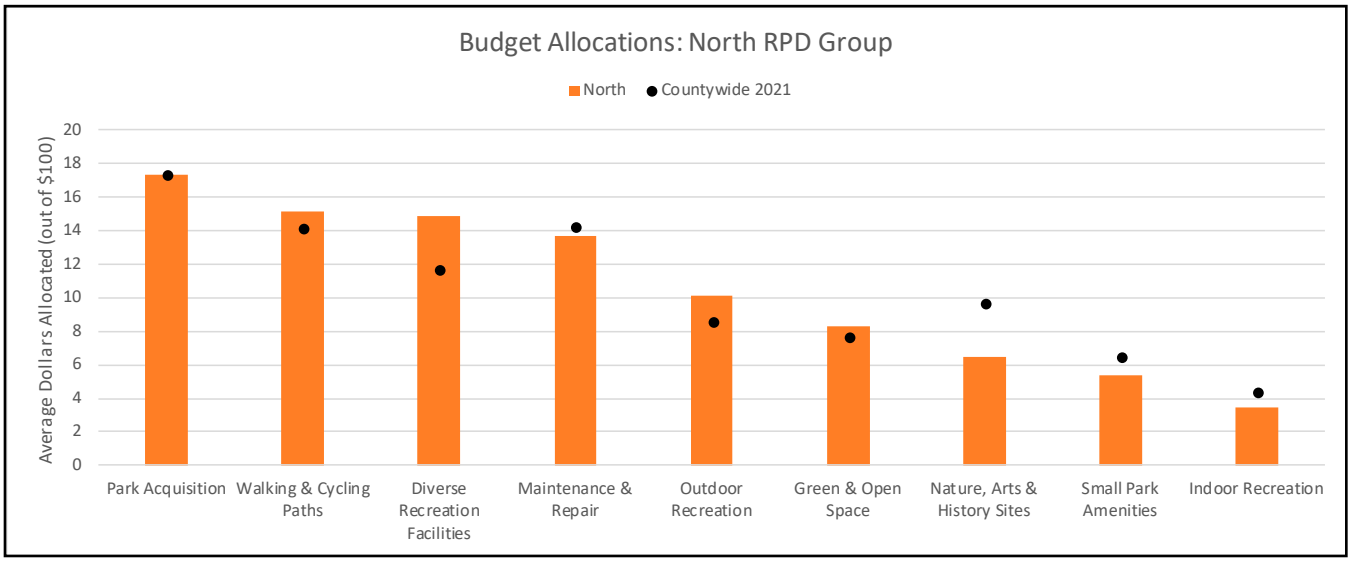


Figure 100. Budget Allocations, North RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Carroll Manor Elementary School Recreation Center**: Replace backboard for basketball; line tennis court for pickleball
- **Jacksonville Elementary School Recreation Center:** Replace dance studio floor; resurface basketball court and replace hoops; enlarge parking area; add dedicated pickleball court
- **Sparks Park**: Currently underutilized and in need of general maintenance and improvements
- **Sweet Air Park and Jacksonville Community Center**: Add turf field with lights

North Central RPD Group

The North Central RPD Group had the highest survey response rate in the county. This area is best served in terms of tennis courts and miles of trail, though it is worst served for picnic facilities. In the planning process for MP 2030, residents expressed that they want parks with walking trails, which is consistent with the survey results, in which bicycle paths, nature trails, and paved paths were the most commonly requested amenity. In survey comments and staff interviews, there was an overall interest in playgrounds at parks, indoor recreation space, pickleball, and a 90' lighted ball diamond.

The top 10 amenities for the North Central RPD Group were very similar to countywide averages, which is expected given that a relatively high percentage of all responses came from residents of this area. The most desired amenities were bicycle lanes, nature trails, and paved paths.

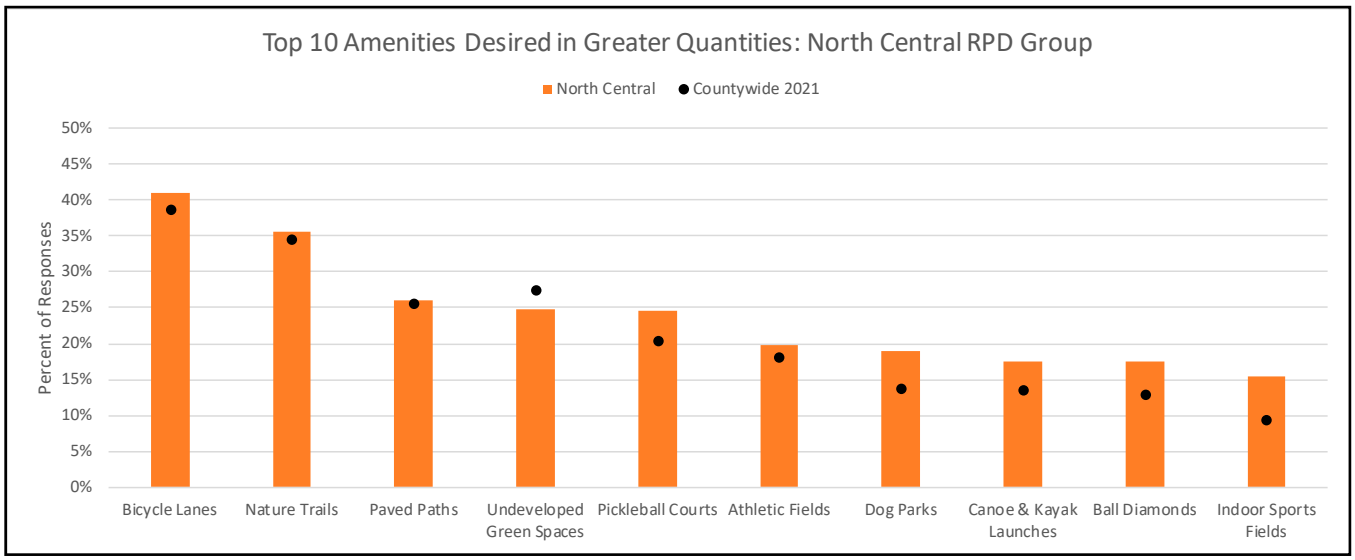


Figure 101. Top 10 Amenities Desired, North Central RPD Group

Residents of the North Central RPD Group created hypothetical budgets similar to the county average, with a slightly higher preference for diverse recreation facilities and lower priority for park acquisition, though it remained the number one response for the area. The North Central RPD Group has a skate park and community garden at County Home Park, but does not have any dog parks or disc golf courses.

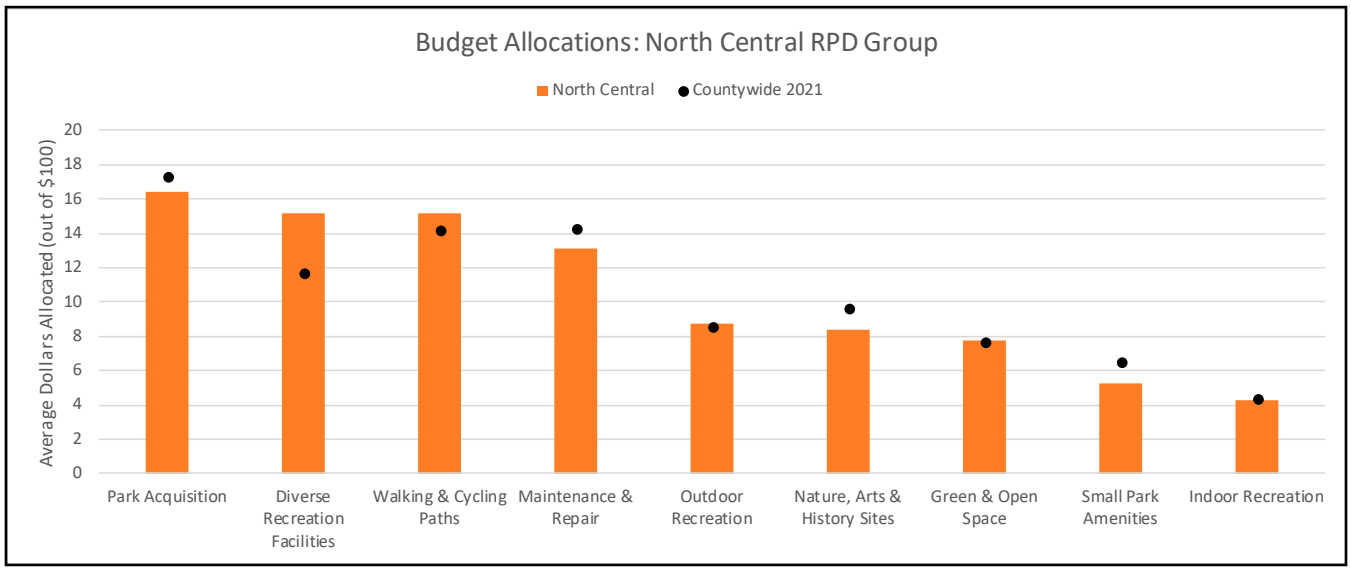


Figure 102. Budget Allocations, North Central RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **County Home Park:** Renovate concession stand; add benches, pavilions, and grills; install permanent pickleball nets; establish hillside trails; additional parking; onsite water source for community gardens; stock ponds with fish
- **Dulaney Springs Park:** Currently underutilized and in need of general maintenance and improvements
- **Hampton Elementary School Recreation Center**: Add basketball hoops to court
- **Orchard Hills Park**: Line multipurpose courts for pickleball
- **Seminary Park**: Update lighting
- **Valley Fields Park South**: Add athletic fields with lights
- **Villa Maria Park**: Add fast pitch softball diamond
- **Warren Place Park:** Add parking to accommodate full use of fields

Northeast RPD Group

The Northeast RPD Group had the highest rating in the county for the availability of parks and recreation facilities, the condition of parks and recreation facilities, and recreation diversity. This region has access to the extensive Gunpowder Falls State Park and the Baltimore City owned Loch Raven Reservoir. The Northeast is well served in terms of local parkland, though it is poorly served with multipurpose courts and indoor recreation spaces relative to the rest of the county, which is reflected in the desire for pickleball (about average) and indoor sports fields (above average) expressed in the survey.

Residents of the Northeast RPD Group expressed a lower than average interest in bicycle lanes and nature trails, though both, along with paved paths, were among their top three desired amenities. There was also a higher than average interest in canoe and kayak launches.

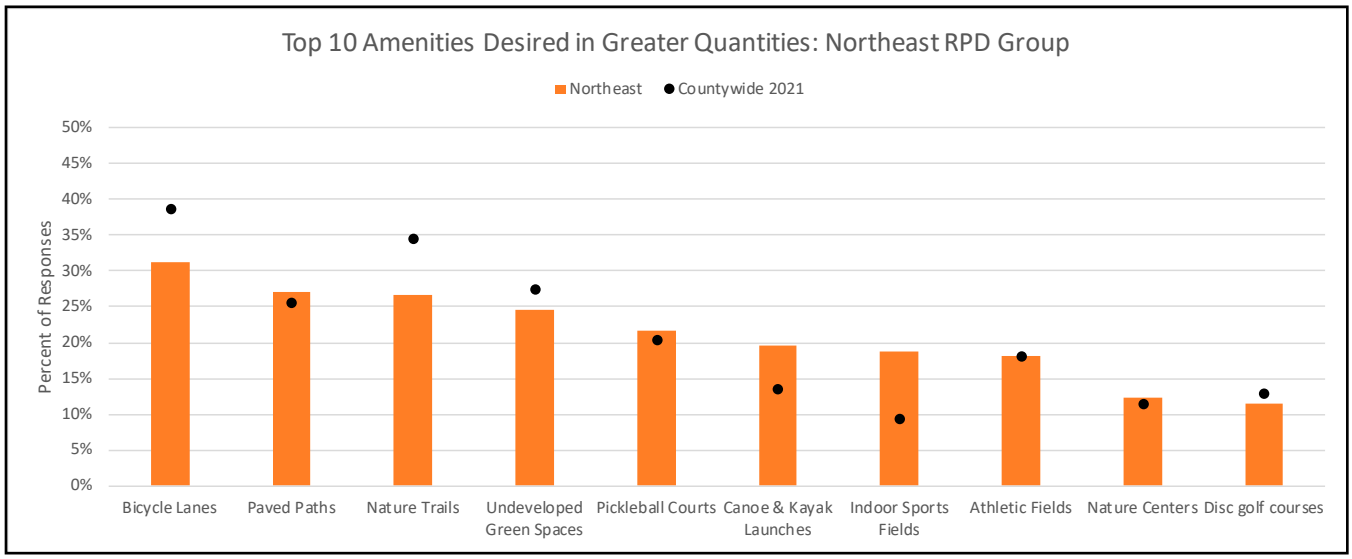


Figure 103. Top 10 Amenities Desired, Northeast RPD Group

The Northeast RPD Group differed from countywide averages most strongly by allocating $12.43 to outdoor recreation facilities, compared with the countywide average of $8.55. There was a slightly lower than average allocation of the hypothetical budget to park acquisition, though it remained the highest priority.

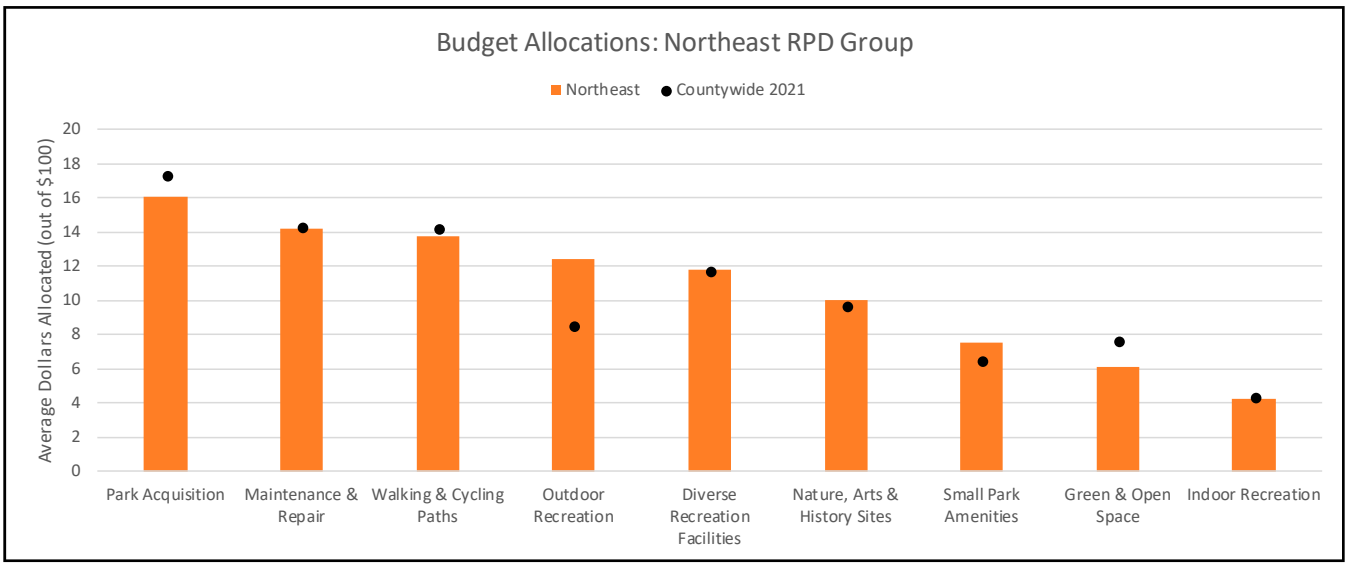


Figure 104. Budget Allocations, Northeast RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Cowenton Ridge Park**: Convert fields to turf
- **Hydes Road Park**: Expand comfort station and parking; add field lighting
- **Loreley Community Center**: Resurface basketball court and field; additional parking
- **Mount Vista Park**: Many ideas for future park development including dog park, 90' diamond, turf field, additional tree plantings, community garden, disc golf course, and mountain biking park
- **Perry Hall Park**: Update lights; convert to turf
- **Snyder Lane Park**: Add pavilion; add playground

Northwest RPD Group

The Northwest RPD Group is anticipated to have among the highest population growth in the next ten years and residents expressed in the MP2030 planning process that they want additional greenspace to accommodate this future growth. In the survey comments, public meeting, and staff interviews, there was a strong overall interest in an indoor recreation center. In the Park Equity Mapper, this RPD Group has portions that are considered among the lowest equity in the county.

Survey respondents in the Northwest expressed an above average interest in bicycle lanes, nature trails, and pickleball courts, which were the top three requested amenities. There was also an above average interest in nature centers and recreation/community centers, showing a desire for more indoor facilities, though these were only ranked number nine and ten, respectively.

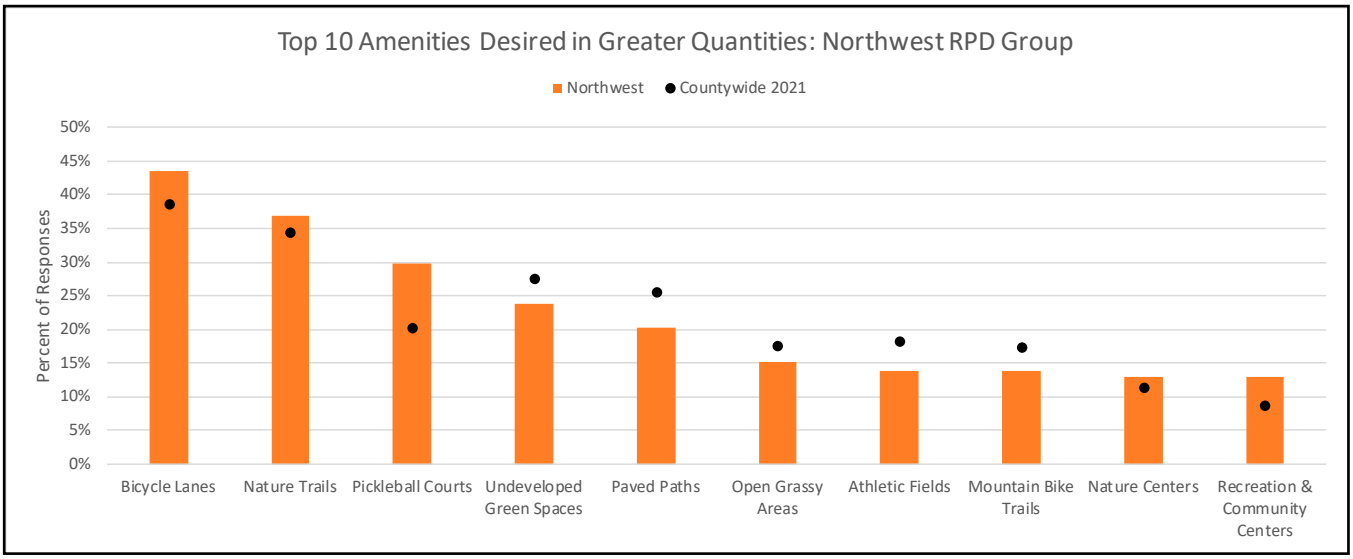


Figure 105. Top 10 Amenities Desired, Northwest RPD Group

Respondents in the Northwest RPD Group allocated $21.74 of their hypothetical $100 budget to park acquisition, compared to the countywide average of $17.36. While the current provision of parklands is close to the countywide average, this region is expected to have a growing population, making park acquisition appropriate. Respondents allocated a slightly lower amount to outdoor recreation on average, reflecting the fact that there is a good provision of traditional outdoor recreation facilities.

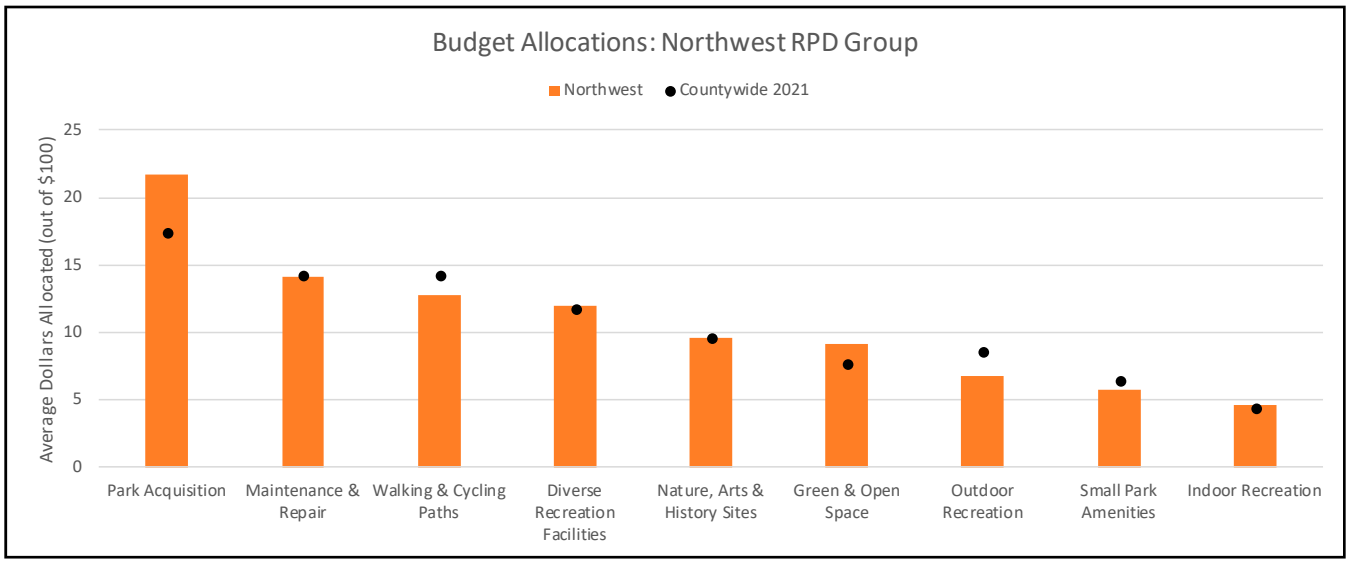


Figure 106. Budget Allocations, Northwest RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Franklin Elementary School Recreation Center:** Expand and improve woods trails
- **Hannah More Park**: Replace playground
- **Reisterstown Regional Park**: Add pavilion or gazebo

Southeast RPD Group

The Southeast RPD Group received fewer than 100 survey responses and had the lowest rating for the condition of recreation and parks facilities. Survey respondents in the Southeast gave the second lowest rating for places to walk, jog, and bike.

Despite being among the best served in the county in terms of athletic fields, the Southeast RPD Group expressed an above average desire for athletic fields. There is a much greater interest in this area in canoe and kayak launches, boat ramps, and fishing areas, reflecting its coastal location. There is also an above average desire for dog parks and indoor pools.

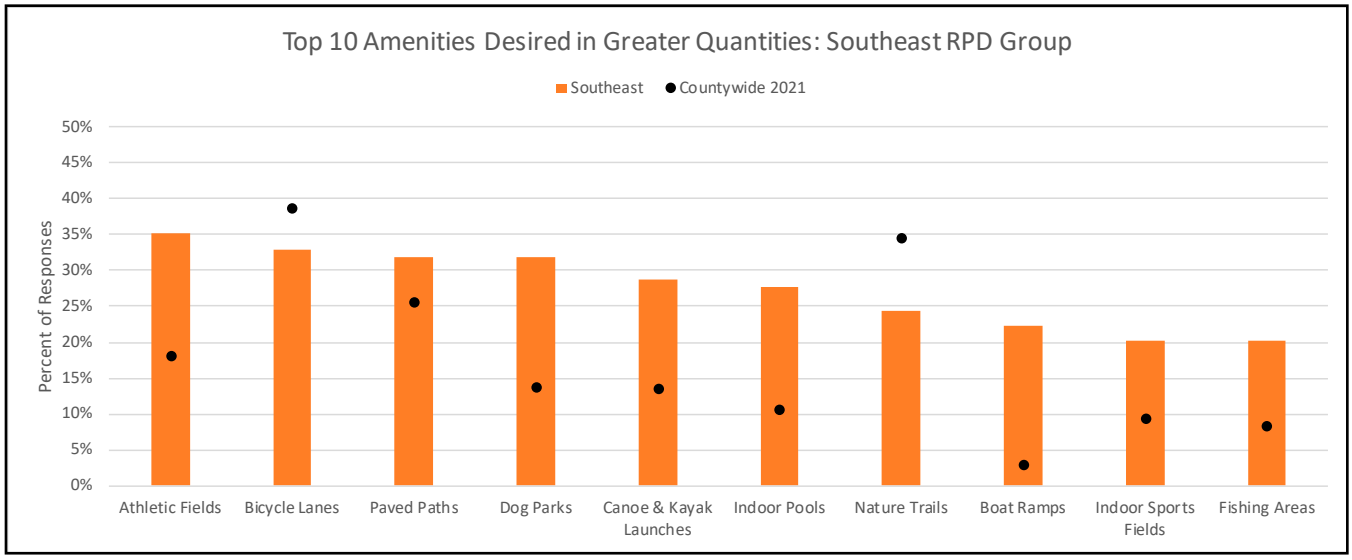


Figure 107. Top 10 Amenities Desired, Southeast RPD Group

Residents in the Southeast RPD group allocated an above average amount of their hypothetical budget to walking an cycling paths ($25.72 compared to the countywide average of $14.19 out of $100). This is in line with the low rating of places to walk and cycle expressed elsewhere in the survey. The hypothetical budget included much less than the countywide average for maintenance and repair ($18.28 compared with the countywide average of $14.26), which is surprising given that the Southeast received the lowest rating in the county for the condition of parks and recreation facilities. It is possible that residents estimated that the needed updates to improve existing parks' conditions would not be very costly, but that the construction of new walking and cycling paths would be expensive.

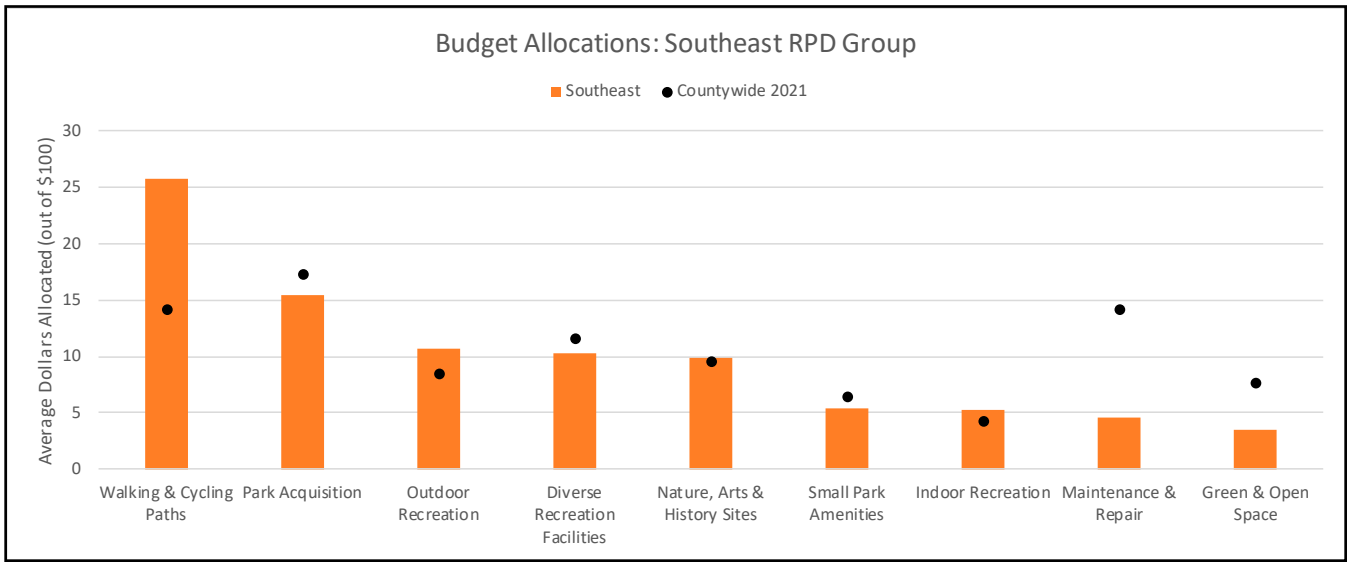


Figure 108. Budget Allocations, Southeast RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Berkshire Elementary School Recreation Center**: Install storage building at upper fields
- **Berkshire Park**: Replace playground
- **Chesterwood Park**: Add comfort station; add turf field
- **Dundalk Community Center and PAL Center**: Repaint indoor recreation center
- **Dundalk Heritage Park**: Add playground
- **Fort Howard Park**: Resurface parking lot and access roads; renovate restrooms; plant pollinator garden; add signage and historical markers
- **Holabird Middle School Recreation Center**: Build 90' ball diamond
- **Inverness Center**: Resurface multipurpose courts and replace baskets; add fencing at ball diamonds
- **Inverness Park**: Add comfort station; add walking paths; replace playground
- **Merritt Point Park**: Upgrade pavilions; replace playground
- **Millers Island Park**: Replace playground
- **Sollers Point Multi-purpose Center**: Repair drainage issues; resurface track; resod football field
- **Sparrows Point High School and Middle School Recreation Center**: Replace field house with building for concessions, storage, and restrooms
- **Stansbury Park**: Allow fishing and non-motorized boating
- **Watersedge Community Center**: Add lights to athletic fields; renovate restrooms; add walking paths

Southwest RPD Group

The Southwest RPD Group is among the most densely populated in the county and had the third highest survey response rate. Residents expressed in the MP2030 planning process that they want improvements to existing parks and community gardens.

This region's most desired amenities reflect countywide trends: bicycle lanes, nature trails, undeveloped greenspace, and paved paths. There was also a demand well above average for dog parks, indoor pools, and playgrounds or tot lots. In the survey comments and staff interviews, there was an overall interest expressed in community gardens, pickleball, and skateparks, as well as trail connections between Oella and Ellicott City. Within this RPD Group, there is an organized movement for the County to purchase the Catonsville Armory, currently owned by the State of Maryland, and convert it to an indoor recreation space. Indoor pools was the only indoor facility that made the list of top 10 amenities for this area.

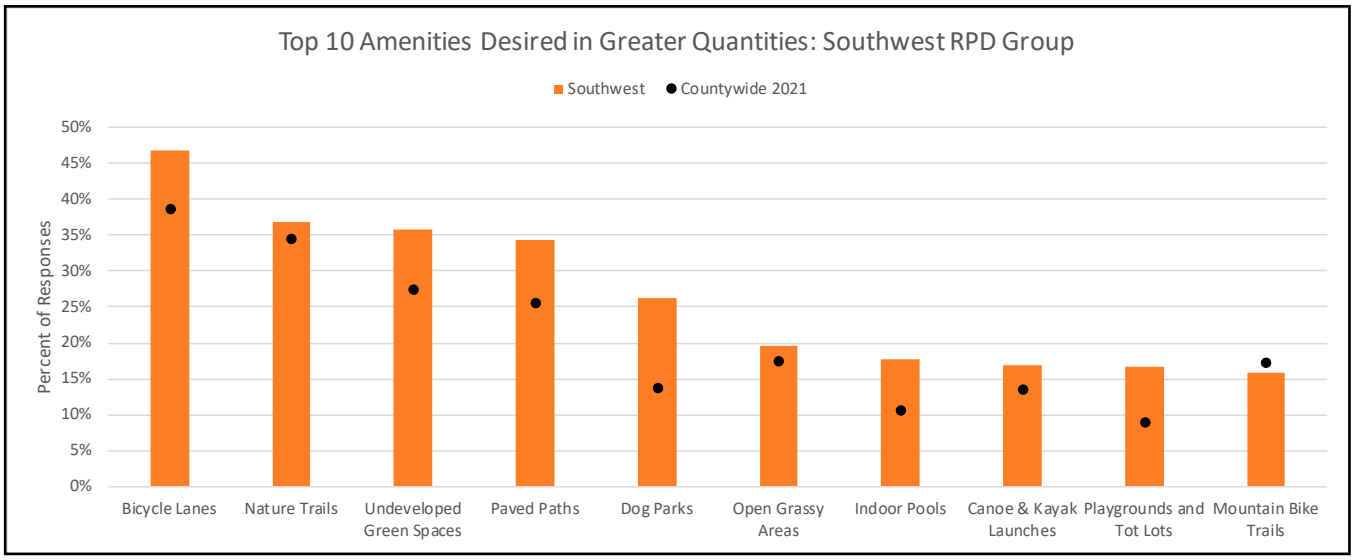


Figure 109. Top 10 Amenities Desired, Southwest RPD Group

Survey respondents in the Southwest RPD Group allocated more than the countywide average to maintenance and repair, which was the item with the highest amount allocated in the hypothetical budget, followed closely by park acquisition. They allocated less than the countywide average to diverse recreational facilities and outdoor recreation, which is in line with the answers to the previous question, in which athletic fields was not among the top ten amenities desired in greater quantities.

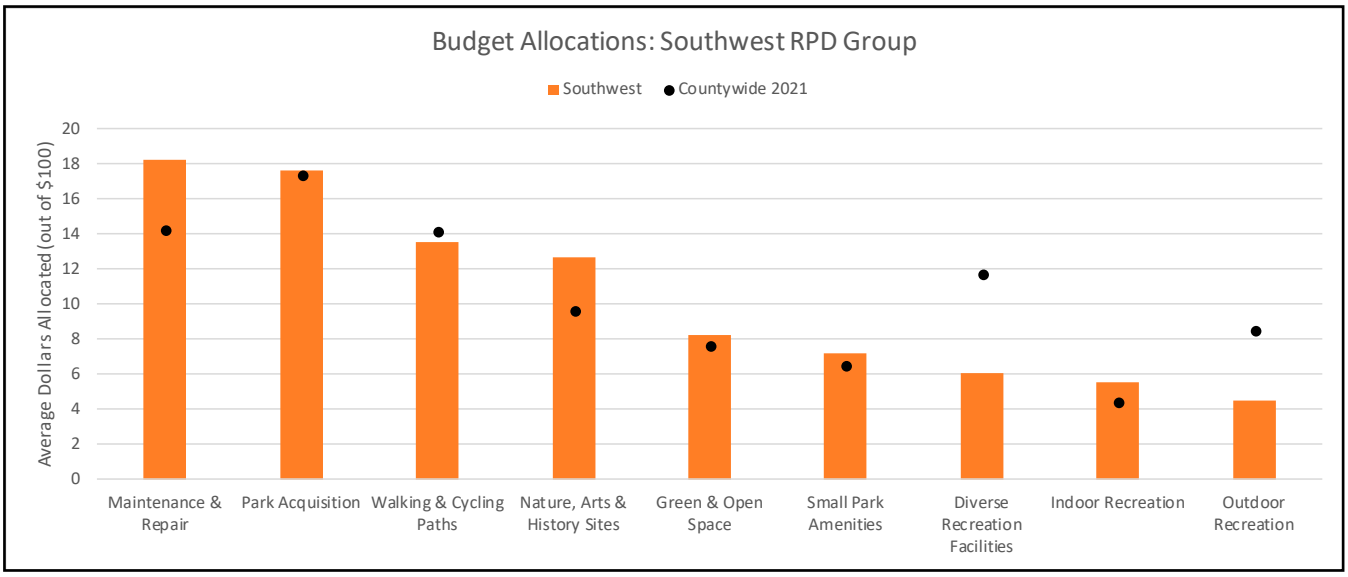


Figure 110. Budget Allocations, Southwest RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Arbutus Elementary School Recreation Center**: Build comfort station for girls' sports fields
- **Banneker Community Center**: Replace floor and add adjustable basketball hoops
- **Gay Oaks Park**: General maintenance and improvements needed; additional tree plantings
- **Halethorpe Community Center and Park**: Install updated air conditioning and wifi; upgrade pavilions and add grills; add a dog park
- **Hillcrest Park**: Repave walking path and add fencing for safety
- **Lansdowne Community Park**: Add community garden with water access
- **Old Catonsville Elementary School Site**: Renovate building for indoor recreation
- **Sandy Hills Park**: Maintain and renovate skate park
- **Southwest Area Park**: Resurface parking lot

West RPD Group

The West RPD Group is identified as an area with low park equity and is among the worst served for playgrounds, trail miles, and local parkland. Residents expressed in the MP2030 planning process a desire for dog parks, which is reflected in the survey.

This region registered a desire for outdoor amphitheaters and stages and indoor arts facilities well above the countywide average. However, the survey response rate was the lowest in the county, with only 26 responses in a region with an estimated 2020 population of almost 58,000 people. There were a total of 13 responses for amphitheaters and 8 for indoor arts. Additional outreach to the communities in the West RPD Group is needed to better understand recreational needs.

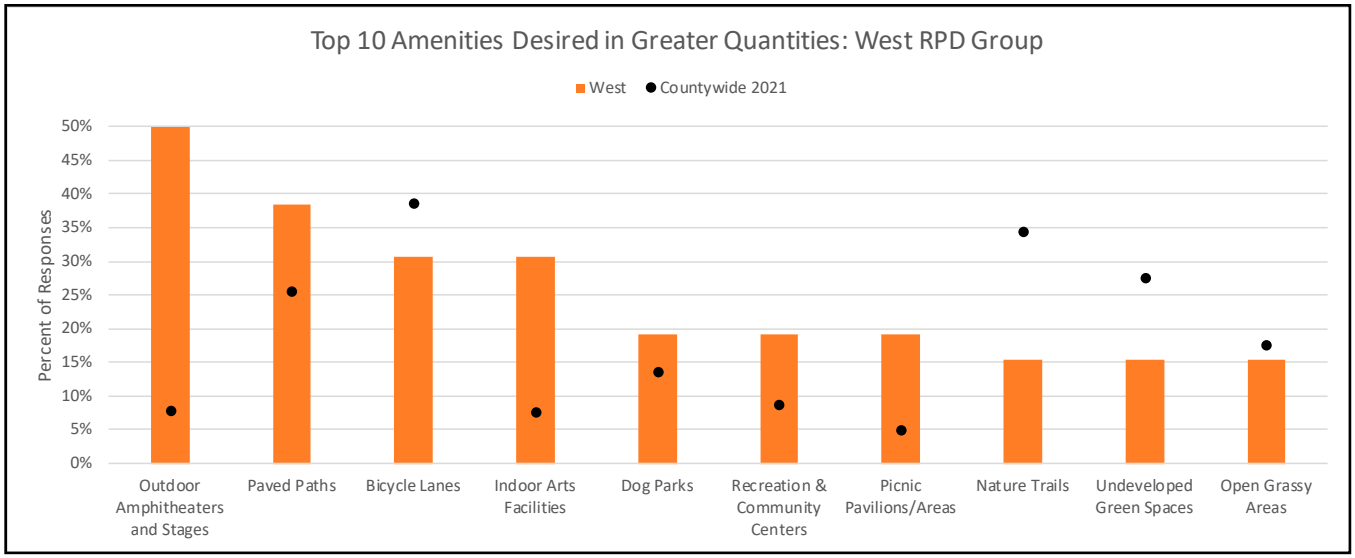


Figure 111. Top 10 Amenities Desired, West RPD Group

Respondents from the West RPD group allocated more than twice as much of their hypothetical budget to outdoor recreation than the countywide average ($17.38 compared to the countywide average of $8.55 out of $100). The West RPD group's responses deviated from the countywide average in several other ways, with more allocated to green and open space and small park amenities and less allocated to park acquisition, walking and cycling paths, nature, arts, and history sites, and diverse recreational facilities. These deviations from the countywide averages may reflect a real difference in recreational preferences or they may be largely a product of the small sample size, with relatively few survey respondents and additional outreach is needed.

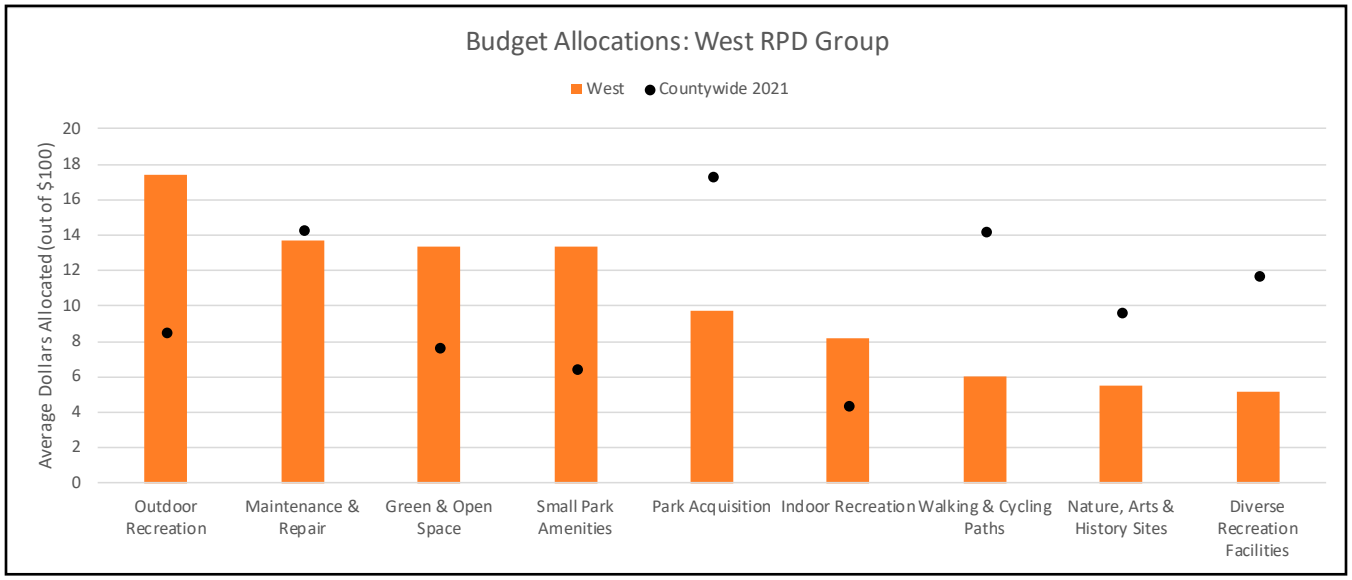


Figure 112. Budget Allocations, West RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Carriage Hills Park**: Build community garden; add comfort station
- **Northwest Regional Park**: Add lighting to driveway and ball diamonds; add woods trail, fitness trail, bike trail; add pavilions
- **Randallstown Community Center**: Resurface track; build storage areas

West Central RPD Group

The West Central RPD Group registered the lowest rating for availability of parks and recreation facilities and residents expressed in the MP 2030 planning process that there is a need to address a current lack of accessible greenspace. This reflects that this area is the worst served with local parkland, though Oregon Ridge Park, an 1100 acre countywide park is located in the Northeast corner of this RPD group. It is also the worst served with ball diamonds, multipurpose courts, tennis courts, and indoor recreation space. The area is shown as having low park equity on the Park Equity Mapper.

The survey responses for amenities desired in greater quantities largely reflected countywide averages, though there was a much greater response for pickleball courts than average. In survey comments and staff interviews, there was an overall interest in indoor recreation space, though no indoor facilities made the top 10 requested amenities. Within this RPD Group, there is an organized movement to convert the Pikesville Armory, which is currently owned by the State of Maryland, to a recreational space that might include indoor recreation.

Given the lack of parklands and many facilities, the West Central RPD group should be a high priority area for additional outreach and recreation and parks investments, particularly in smaller neighborhood parks.

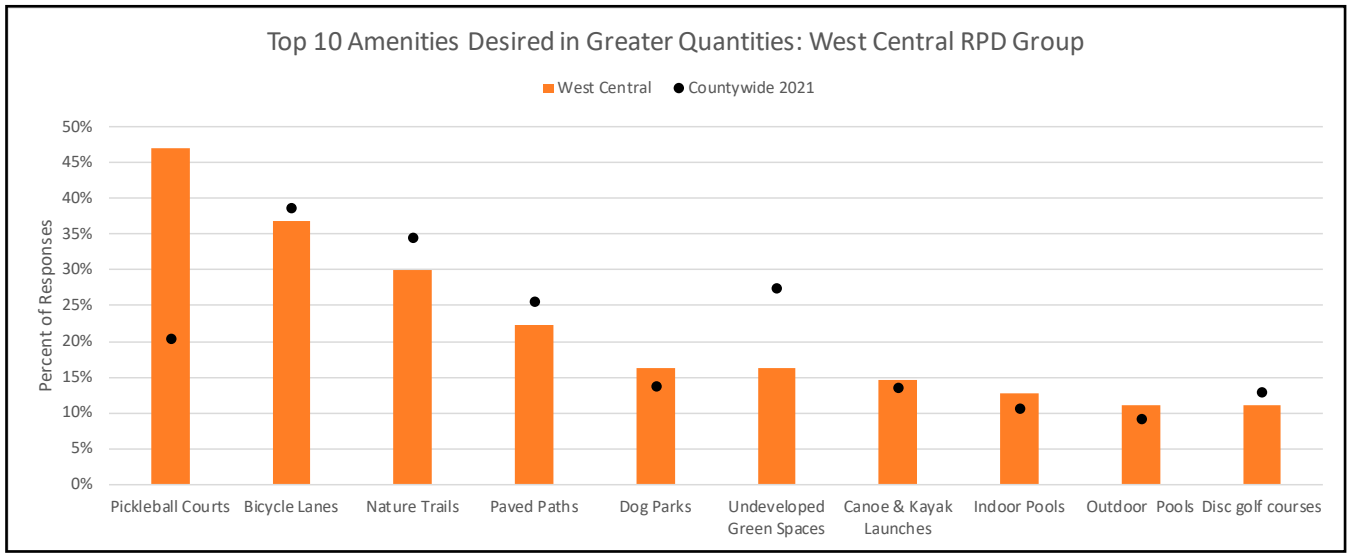


Figure 113. Top 10 Amenities Desired, West Central RPD Group

Survey respondents in the West Central RPD Group allocated more than the countywide average to diverse recreation facilities (like dog parks, skate parks, and community gardens) in their hypothetical budgets. Respondents allocated much less to maintenance and repair ($8.45 compared to the countywide average of $14.26). Park acquisition was the second priority in hypothetical budgets for the West Central, which is in line with the fact that the region has fewer local parks than most areas of the county.

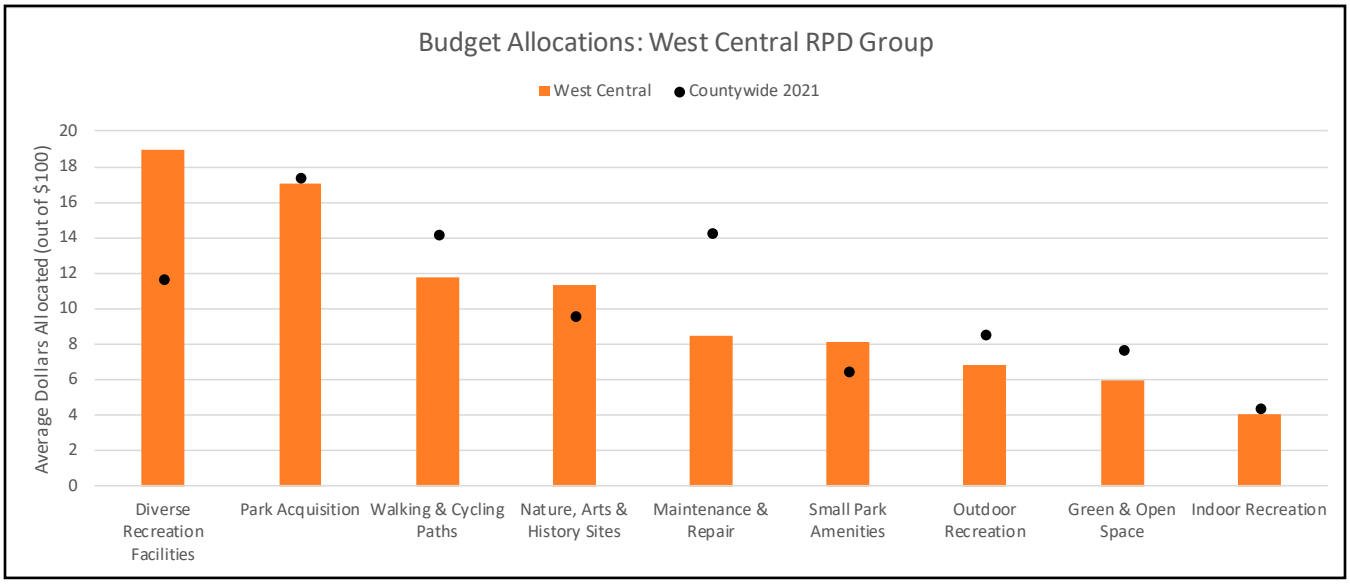


Figure 114. Budget Allocations, West Central RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Meadowood Regional Park**: Replace fence around turf; divert water from entrance road
- **Oregon Ridge Park**: Improve trails to prevent erosion; improve nature center building including adding air conditioning; add 90' diamond to Shawan Roads fields. This park is currently undergoing a comprehensive master planning process.

West Southwest RPD Group

The West Southwest RPD Group is among the most densely populated and is identified in the Park Equity Mapper as an area of low park equity. This region had the second lowest survey response rate. The responses received rated the area lowest in the county for recreation diversity, undeveloped open space, and places to walk, jog, and bike.

In the MP2030 planning process, residents expressed a need for parks with walkable connections, which is reflected in the above average desire for paved paths. Residents also expressed a desire well above county averages for indoor pools, outdoor amphitheaters and stages, and picnic pavilions. Like in the West RPD Group, this may reflect an actual difference in residents' desires or may largely be due to the relatively low survey response rate.

Given the low survey response, the low equity scores, and the lack of many facilities, the West Southwest RPD group should be a high priority area for additional outreach and recreation and parks investments.

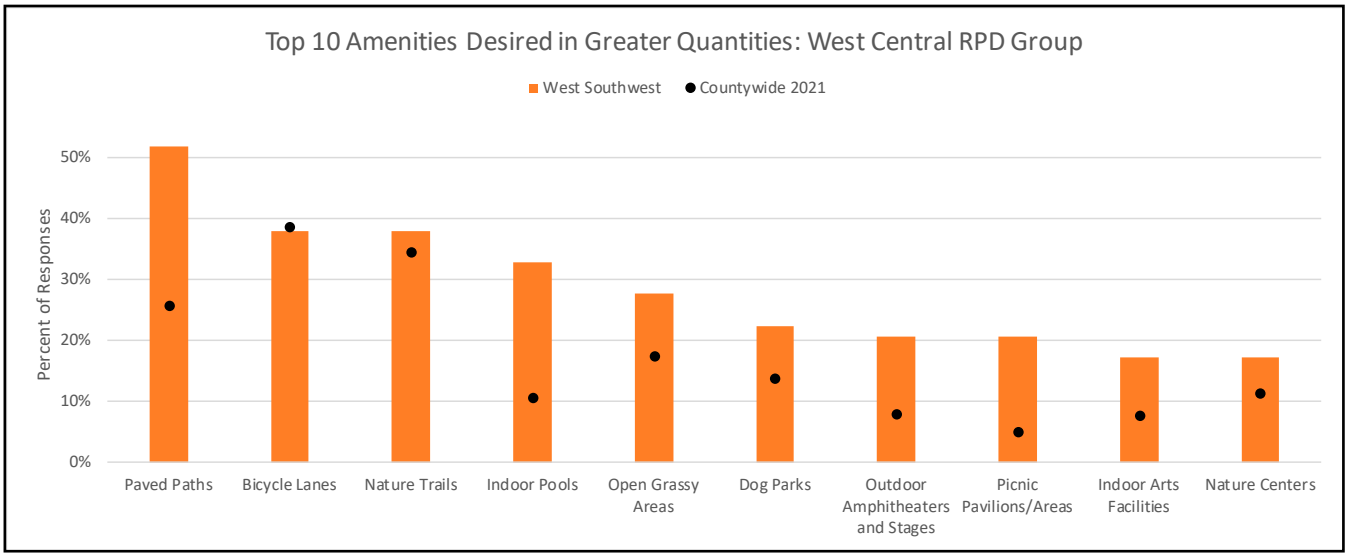


Figure 115. Top 10 Amenities Desired, West Southwest RPD Group

Residents of the West Southwest RPD Group allocated slightly more than the countywide average to park acquisition, which was the top priority in the hypothetical budget. They allocated less to maintenance and repair and to diverse recreation facilities. Walking and cycling paths received the second highest allocation of funds in the hypothetical budget, followed by outdoor recreation and small park amenities. Respondents in this RPD Group allocated more to indoor recreation than average, possibly reflecting that there are several PAL facilities in the area that would benefit from updates, detailed below. Given the low survey response rate, additional outreach is needed, but the desire for new park acquisition and walking and cycling paths is in line with the current relatively low provision of these amenities in the West Southwest.

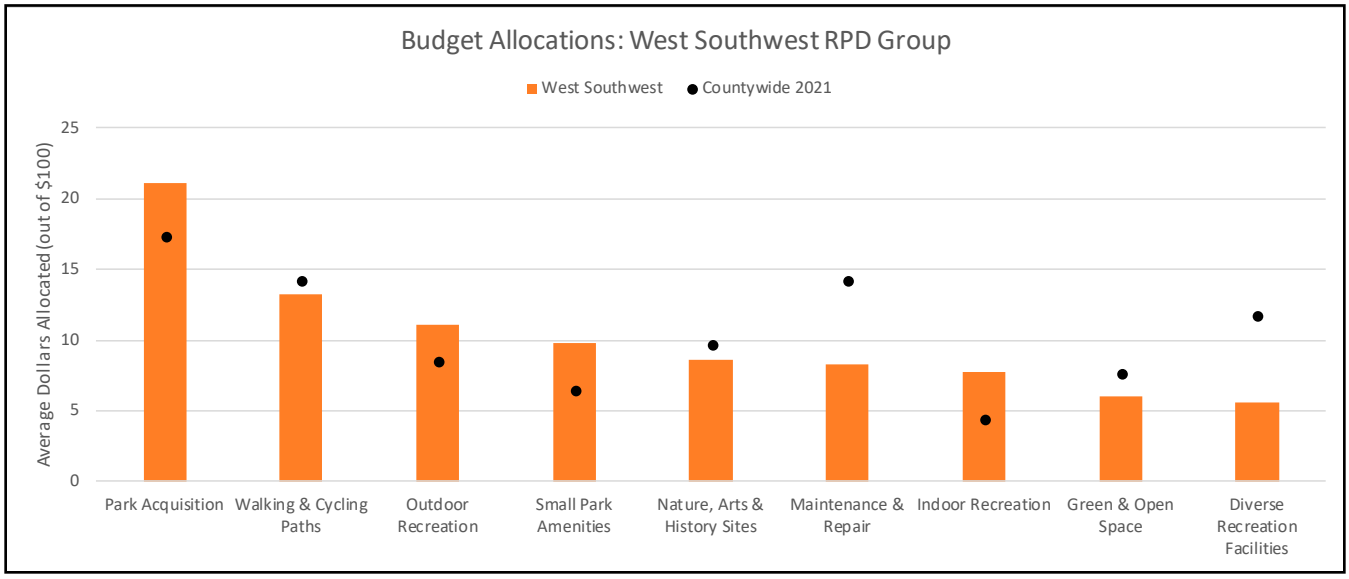


Figure 116. Budget Allocations, West Southwest RPD Group

Requested Park Improvements

- **Banneker Historic Park**: Expand indoor programming space
- **Burnside Park**: Add comfort station
- **Diamond Ridge Family Park**: Replace footbridge (in process)
- **Edmondson Heights Park**: General maintenance and improvements needed
- **Gwynn Oak Park**: Upgrade comfort stations and pavilions
- **Gwynnvale Park**: Add community garden
- **Rockdale Park**: Add walking trail; improve community garden drainage; replace ball diamond with accessible playground
- **Sudbrook Park**: Add pavilions and comfort station
- **Trolley Line Number Nine Trail**: Repave surface and add benches
- **Western Hills Park**: Add comfort station; build community center; additional tree plantings
- **Westview Park**: Add comfort station; build community garden
- **Winfield PAL**: Add a full-sized gym
- **Woodlawn Memorial Park**: add comfort station
- **Woodmoor PAL**: Replace gym floor; expand gym; renovate outdoor court



CHAPTER SIX

IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMS

6.1 Introduction

In order to achieve the goals set forth in Chapter Five and to meet the parks and recreation needs of its residents and visitors, Baltimore County uses a variety of capital funding sources that support land acquisition and park development, enhancement, and renovation programs. The amount of capital funding available can vary significantly by fiscal year, with each fiscal year running from July 1st through June 30th (example: Fiscal Year 2022 began July 1, 2021, and ends June 30, 2022). The County has long utilized a two-fiscal year capital budget cycle, typically budgeting the majority of funding (including general obligation bonds, which are authorized and appropriated every other year) in even-numbered years. Additional capital funding may also be appropriated in odd-numbered fiscal years, to supplement any unexpended capital funding from the prior year.





The table below displays the most common revenue sources within the capital budget. The figures clearly show the greatly expanded commitment to parks and recreation in recent years. The more than $33 million in capital funding in the most recently completed two-year budget period of Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 was just $3.9 million less than the prior four years combined. Most notably, the $72.8 million appropriated in Fiscal Year 2022 is more than the total funding appropriated in the seven years that include Fiscal Years 2014 through 2020.

Table 9. Capital Budget Revenue Sources, FY2014 to FY 2022

Fiscal Year	Program Open Space*	State Aid	Federal - State	General Funds	Bonds and Debt Premiums	Local Open Space Waiver Fees	Total
2022	$7,255,442	$16,750,000	$465,733	$7,268,757	$41,031,243	$70,000	$72,841,175
2021	$6,010,738	$908,400	$324,000	$0	$6,745,000	$0	$13,988,138
2020	$6,522,734	$1,095,000	$180,000	$6,300,000	$4,000,000	$935,000	$19,032,734
2019	$7,263,913	$275,000	$0	$2,500,000	$0	$100,000	$10,138,913
2018	$4,947,383	$430,000	$0	$1,662,711	$4,000,000	$75,000	$11,115,094
2017	$2,883,744	$705,000	$0	$2,500,000	$0	$0	$6,088,744
2016	$2,918,646	$334,000	$0	$2,000,000	$4,000,000	$350,000	$9,602,646
2015	$2,856,162	$0	$0	$2,950,000	$0	$0	$5,806,162
2014	$3,782,495	$2,020,000	$0	$968,460	$2,000,000	$300,000	$9,070,955
*- Program Open Space funding is actual allocation, rather than amount budgeted							

6.2 Funding Sources

Following is a summary of the funding sources displayed in the above table. In addition to those revenue types, other less common funding sources sometimes contribute to the capital budget, including donations and contributions from land developers, most commonly as a result of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) agreements that requires a public benefit.

Program Open Space

Program Open Space (POS) funding, which derives from State of Maryland real estate transfer tax revenues, is shared between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the counties, including Baltimore City. Unless a county has reached its parkland acreage goal, a minimum of 50% of the county's annual POS funding allocation must be utilized for parkland acquisition, with the remainder available to be spent on park development or rehabilitation. In most cases, POS funding may be requested for 100% of the appraised value of most parkland purchases, and may be used to fund up to 75% of the cost of park development and capital rehabilitation projects. Because POS funding is based upon the amount of incoming real estate transfer tax revenues, the amount of funding is variable and fluctuates with economic conditions. Transfer tax revenues have grown steadily over the last five years. Whereas Baltimore County's apportionment (as established by a State formula) was less than $3 million in each of Fiscal Years 2015 – 2017, the average annual allocation increased to more than $6.75 million in the four-year period including Fiscal Years 2019 through 2022.

State Aid

The most common forms of State Aid have traditionally derived from bond bills and capital grants, both of which are secured through the efforts of the State Senators and Delegates during the annual session of the Maryland State Legislature. In some circumstances the Governor will likewise propose funding for local projects in the proposed budget. Bond bills will commonly require matching funds from the funding recipient, whereas capital grants typically require no match. Such funding is usually dedicated to specific uses, such as improvements at a certain park or the construction of new recreational facilities. The State legislators representing Baltimore County residents have been very supportive in recent years, securing $900,000 or more in each of Fiscal Years 2020 through 2022.

The $16.75 million secured in Fiscal Year 2022 includes a new State funding program created during the 2021 legislative session—the Local Parks and Playgrounds Infrastructure (LPPI) program. LPPI was created in recognition of the vital role that parks played during the COVID-19 pandemic, when free-time use of many types of parks and recreational facilities grew immensely. The program reinforces the support of State legislators for ensuring that plentiful and equitable recreational opportunities are available to all.

Federal — State

This category includes and funding deriving from programs that often combine State and Federal sources and has not been commonly utilized by the County over the past decade. The most common of these programs is associated with boating, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Often the State of Maryland administers "pass-through" Federal funding that is used for both State and local projects. A good example is recent Federal – State funding granted to the County for the replacement of the Merritt Point Park Boat Ramp.

This funding category may also include Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding. (LWCF) funding is a less consistently available funding source that is sometimes utilized for park acquisition and development, with the program primarily focusing upon providing or supporting outdoor recreation opportunities. The last LWCF funding received by the County was in 2007-2008, for the acquisition of the Rolling Mill Farm Property (now the Baltimore County Agricultural Center and Farm Park) and improvements to the Willow Grove Nature Center at Cromwell Valley Park.

The Rural Legacy Program is a State funded Program with the purpose to combat sprawl development and to expedite the preservation of large blocks of natural resources and working landscapes. Baltimore County has five approved Rural Legacy Area,

the most of any jurisdiction. The RLAs in Baltimore County include: Piney Run Rural Legacy Area, Gunpowder Rural Legacy Area, Manor Rural Legacy Area, Long Green Rural Legacy Area and the Baltimore County Coastal Rural Legacy Area.

Maryland's Rural Legacy Program provides funding to preserve large, contiguous tracts of land and to enhance natural resource, agricultural, forestry and environmental protection while supporting a sustainable land base for natural resource based industries. The program creates public-private partnerships and allows those who know the landscape best – land trusts and local governments – to determine the best way to protect the landscapes that are critical to our economy, environment and quality of life. Baltimore County also provides Capital Funds towards preservation within the approved Rural Legacy Areas.

General Funds

This form of County funding derives from various forms of tax revenues paid to Baltimore County. Such funds are considered discretionary and are utilized not only for capital budgeting purposes, but also to fund the County operating budget and pay off debt deriving from general obligation bonds. Within the Recreation and Parks capital budget, general funds are utilized as the primary funding source for park and facility renovation programs. A significant increase in general funds have been appropriated in Fiscal Years 2020 and 2022, largely for the purpose of providing expanded funding for the essential facility renovation programs.6.3

County Bond and Debt Premium

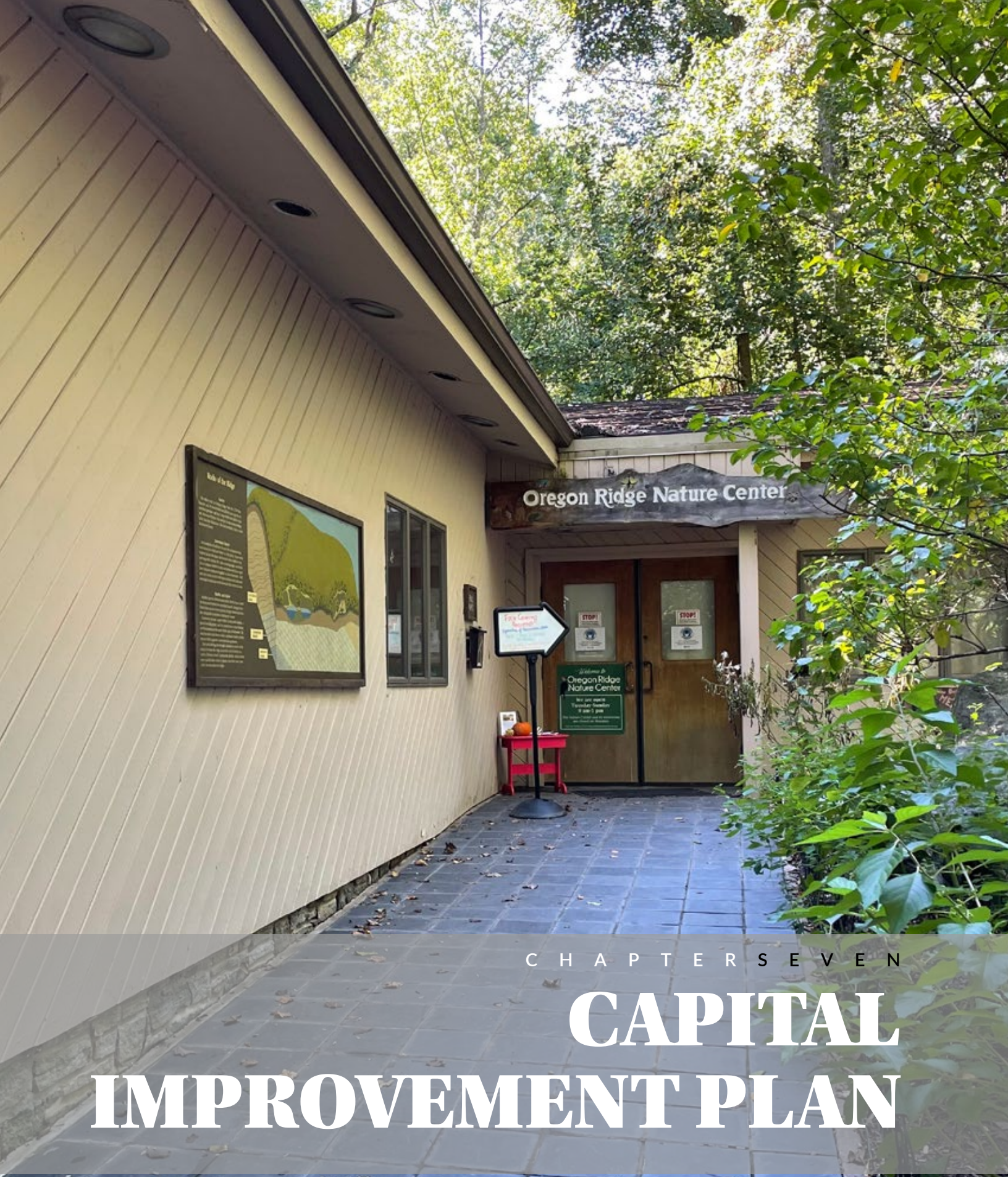
During even-numbered election years, an assortment of County bond referendums/ordinances are placed on the ballot during the general election, including a borrowing question for parks, preservation and greenways. These questions ask Baltimore County voters to approve the issuance of general obligation bonds to fund County capital projects, generally spent over a two-year budget cycle that begins in the even-numbered fiscal year two numbers higher than the election year (e.g., the recent 2020 bond referendum authorized borrowing for FY'22). In the case of parks, preservation and greenways, the bond funding is for general recreation and parks capital projects rather than one or more specific projects/jobs.

Between 1958 and 2000, the bond referendum amounts for parks, preservation and greenways ranged from a low amount of $500,000 in 1958 to a high of $10,029,000 in 2000. The bond funding request put to the voters for parks and recreation was $4 million in the 2014, 2016, and 2018 general elections, with that amount equating to approximately 1.2% of the total approved bond amount for Fiscal Year 2020. The present County Executive, Administration, and Council made an unprecedented commitment to parks and recreation in the most recent election, putting forth a parks, preservation, and greenways borrowing ordinance of $35 million, equating to 8.9% of the total amount of approved borrowing. Voters overwhelmingly supported the ordinance, supporting it at a rate of 82.1%, tied for the second highest approval rating of the nine borrowing ordinances.

Debt premium funding is a less common form of funding, and is associated with increased funding made available as a result of reduced interest rates on general obligation bonds.

Local Open Space (LOS) Waiver Fees

This form of funding, which is unique to the DRP, derives from fees-in-lieu of open space that are sometimes paid by developers via the County's development process. Such funds must be used for park purposes, including park acquisition, development, and rehabilitation. A portion of LOS waiver revenues (typically 20%) are allocated to the non-profit NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, to support their conservation and local park efforts within the urbanized portion of the County's URDL. The amount of LOS waiver fees collected each fiscal year varies greatly, and is impacted by the housing market, number of waivers and associated fees-in-lieu approved each year, and the development timetable for subdivisions for which waivers were approved. The amounts in the table reflect budgetary adjustments to account for fees-in-lieu collected and anticipated, versus the actual amount of funding collected or utilized each year.

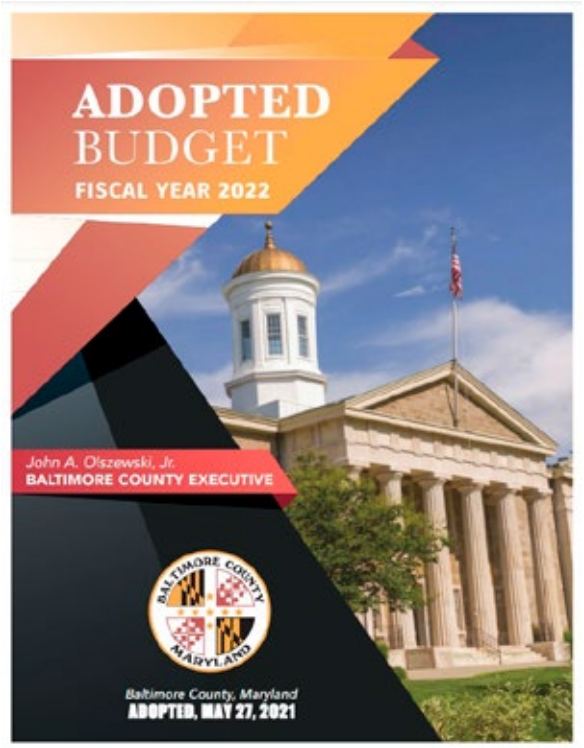


CHAPTER SEVEN

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

7.1 Introduction

The capital improvement program (CIP) provides the budgetary framework for the capital resources that are utilized to make progress towards achieving the park, recreation, and open space goals identified earlier in this plan, as well as the previously listed general recommendations. The majority of funding for recreation and parks capital projects is included within the "parks, preservation and greenways" section of the CIP, though this funding is sometimes supplemented by other budgetary resources. Most funding within the CIP is budgeted for two-year periods starting in even numbered years, so that the funding allocated for fiscal year 2022 would be intended to be utilized in fiscal years 2022 and 2023. Funding not expended within a given fiscal year is often reallocated to address the greatest needs from year to year. An example would be reallocating unexpended funds from the "neighborhood and community park development" project (budget category) to the "recreation facility renovations" project during the annual capital budget process because of a greater need for park renovations/ rehabilitation. The CIP outlines potential goals and projects, which are subject to change depending on emerging needs and funding availability.



The CIP is connected to and has relationships with multiple documents, as displayed in the diagram. The County Master Plan is the primary advisory guide that impacts both the County CIP and LPPRP. The CIP and LPPRP are themselves closely related, and support one another. Finally, the CIP and LPPRP, combined, are utilized to craft the County's POS Annual Program. The Annual Program presents Baltimore County's anticipated POS-assisted projects for the upcoming fiscal year, and is prepared each year after the County's budget formulation process is complete. Public input significantly impacts the preparation of the top three of the documents, with formal input processes associated with each.



Baltimore County has not yet reached its goals for protected and park lands, and so the Capital Improvement Program includes funds ($7.9 M in FY22) to acquire additional land, alongside funds for park improvements and development. These acquisitions and projects will help to provide a greater level of service to all Baltimore County residents and acquisitions will help to address a lack of open space in some areas of the County.



7.2 Capital Improvement Plan

One of the required components of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) is a "capital improvement plan" that reflects the analyses, goals, input, etc. presented within the plan. The following is specifically stated in the LPPRP guidelines (the "NOTE" can be ignored since Baltimore County has no municipalities):

> 7. Capital Improvement Plan
>
> Based on stated goals and review of the analyses described in these guidelines, a 5-year parks and recreation capital improvement plan (FYs 2022 - 2026) for land acquisition, facility development and rehabilitation priorities must be developed and included in the LPPRP.
>
> It is suggested that counties use a spreadsheet for this purpose and include approximate acreage to acquire; number, type, and locations of facilities to develop or rehabilitate; and estimated costs. This should also include municipal projects and acquisitions to align with Annual Program requests. A spreadsheet including the same information for mid-term and long-term planning horizons (e.g. 2027-2031 and 2032-2036) is recommended.
>
> NOTE: To ensure that the LPPRP considers all residents, the Guidelines require coordination between counties and their municipalities when identifying land acquisitions, park development, or park rehabilitation projects. Briefly discuss how the county coordinates with the local jurisdictions by describing the process for including municipal park and recreation priorities in the county LPPRP, the strategy for funding projects in municipalities, how municipal projects are represented in the CIP, etc.

Traditionally, the County's LPPRPs included substantial lists of "Acquisition, Development, and Capital Rehabilitation Priorities," presented in a table of short, mid, and long-term period priorities, with caveats such as the following included:

> *** - Note that these cost estimates, listed in thousands of dollars, are very rough and do not reflect engineer cost estimates, bid prices, or other such formalized approaches to defining projected costs. Additionally, it should be noted that funding sources are not defined, and may range from county, state and federal funding, to donations. It is likewise important to note that the project priorities list is a general guide, that fiscal constraints do not allow all projects to be completed, and that priorities vary as time passes.**

The 2005-2006 LPPRP update featured sixteen pages of project priorities, including detailed lists for facility renovation programs, and utilized the three planning periods (short, medium, and long-term). The 2012 LPPRP had a much shorter list of only three pages, with far less detail than the prior plan, and the use of project categories for even larger scale projects such as community & neighborhood parks, regional parks, and path, trail, and sidewalks.

The following pages show capital priorities, including currently budgeted park development and enhancement projects at specific sites, multi-site capital programs, and possible additions contingent on funding. These represent ongoing capital improvements to the recreation and parks system, informed by both the 2017 LPPRP and input and analysis within this 2022 LPPRP. Where specific parks are mentioned, the RPD group used in this report is noted. In some circumstances multiple RPD groups are served by a single site. This is particularly the case for regional and countywide parks.

Most development and enhancements projects within the Capital Improvement Plan are planned for specific parks, though some, such as "Trail Renovations and Construction," will be carried out at multiple parks where needed. Our acquisition program is more general, as acquisitions depend on availability of land. Acquisitions will be guided by the level of service analysis presented here and will aim to create a more equitable parks and recreation system. When applying for POS funding for acquisition, we reference this document to show how each parcel purchased advances our goals and addresses deficiencies.

The following plan presents anticipated projects and funding amounts through FY 2026. These provide a road map for making capital improvements, but are ultimately subject to funding availability. In addition, the Department will continue to respond to changing community needs and may make adjustments to funding priorities in the years ahead, typically through the annual CIP formulation process.

Capital Improvement Plan: Park Development, Single Sites

Job Name	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	RPD GROUP
McCormick ESRC (Rosedale) Community PAL Center	$7,900,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	East
Glenmar ESRC (Middle River) Community PAL Center	$7,600,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	East
Hazelwood Park Skatepark	$3,200,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	East Central
Church Lane Park Design & Construction	$1,400,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	West Central
Sparrows Point Park Design and Construction	$18,000,000	$3,900,000	$0	$0	$0	Southeast
Gwynn Oak Park Renovations and Enhancements	$1,900,000	$600,000	$0	$0	$0	West
Northwest Regional Park Destination Playground	$1,200,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	West
Cromwell Valley Park Renovations and Enhancements	$1,200,000	$2,200,000	$1,500,000	$0	$0	Central
Greens Lane Park Design and Construction	$4,900,000	$5,300,000	$0	$0	$0	West
Belfast Road Park Phase One Design and Construction	$2,500,000	$4,500,000	$0	$0	$0	North
Diamond Ridge Park Renovations and Enhancements	$900,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	West Southwest
Rockdale Park Renovations and Enhancements	$3,000,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	West Southwest
Fleming Park Renovations and Enhancements	$800,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	Southeast
Banneker Community Center Destination Playground	$0	$700,000	$0	$0	$0	Southwest
Rocky Point Park Point Area Renovations and Enhancements	$300,000	$500,000	$0	$0	$0	East
Oregon Ridge Park Enhancements	$4,600,000	$5,400,000	$5,000,000	$0	$5,000,000	West Central
Western Hills Community Center - Feasibility Study, Design, and Construction	$700,000	$0	$10,000,000	$0	$0	West Southwest
Double Rock Park Renovations and Enhancements	$200,000	$200,000	$0	$0	$0	East
Cheverly Road Park Site and Department of Recreation and Parks Headquarters	$2,000,000	$1,000,000	$0	$0	$0	Central
Holt Park and Center for the Arts Renovations and Enhancements	$0	$3,000,000	$2,500,000	$2,500,000	$0	East Central
Hamiltowne Park Renovations and Enhancements	$0	$500,000	$0	$0	$0	East Central
Cox's Point Park Renovations and Enhancements	$1,200,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	East
Merritt Point Park Renovations and Enhancements	$1,600,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	Southeast

Note: Project priorities and funding amounts are subject to change.

Capital Improvement Plan: Park Development, Single Sites

Job Name	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	RPD GROUP
Cloverland Park Enhancements	$0	$300,000	$1,000,000	$0	$0	North
Day's Cove Park Design and Development	$0	$400,000	$1,100,000	$0	$0	Northeast
Bedford Road Park Design and Development	$0	$300,000	$1,000,000	$0	$0	West Southwest
Fort Howard Park Renovations and Enhancements	$0	$200,000	$300,000	$3,500,000	$0	Southeast
Northwest Regional Park Splash Pad and Parking Expansion Design and Construction	$0	$300,000	$4,000,000	$0	$0	West
Northwest Regional Park Exercise Pavilion	$300,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	West
Banneker Historical Park and Museum Enhancements	$0	$3,000,000	$2,500,000	$0	$0	West Southwest
Fields at Renaissance Park - Synthetic Field and Lighting Design and Construction	$1,100,000	$1,200,000	$0	$0	$0	East
Gerst Road Park Site Planning, Design, and Construction	$100,000	$0	$400,000	$4,000,000	$0	Northeast
Halethorpe Community Center Renovations	$0	$500,000	$0	$0	$0	Southwest
Catonsville Middle School Recreation Center Scoreboard and Sign	$0	$100,000	$0	$0	$0	West Southwest
Rocky Point Park Renovations and Enhancements	$0	$0	$0	$500,000	$3,000,000	East
Rosedale Park Accessibility Enhancements	$0	$300,000	$1,200,000	$0	$0	East Central
Mount Vista Park Renovations and Enhancements	$0	$0	$400,000	$3,600,000	$0	Northeast
Villa Maria Park Enhancements	$0	$0	$0	$300,000	$2,200,000	North Central
Belle Grove Road Park Site Design and Construction	$0	$0	$300,000	$1,700,000	$0	Southwest
Woodley Avenue Park Site Design and Construction	$0	$0	$0	$200,000	$900,000	Northwest
Miami Beach Park Renovations and Enhancements	$0	$0	$300,000	$1,500,000	$0	East
Lake Roland Park - Accessible Canoe and Kayak Launch	$0	$0	$0	$0	$300,000	Central
Number Nine Trolley Line Trail Renovations and Enhancements	$0	$0	$0	$400,000	$2,500,000	West Southwest
North Point Peninsula Trail	$600,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	Southeast
Subtotal for Park Development	$67,200,000	$34,400,000	$31,500,000	$18,200,000	$13,900,000	0

 Note: Project priorities and funding amounts are subject to change.

Capital Improvement Plan: Park Rehabilitation, Single Sites

Job Name	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	RPD GROUP
Merritt Point Park Boat Ramp Replacement	$900,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	Southeast
Milford Mill Trail Reconstruction	$800,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	West Southwest
Agricultural Center and Farm Park Drainage Renovations	$0	$100,000	$0	$0	$0	North
Stansbury Park Renovations	$0	$500,000	$0	$0	$0	Southeast
Randallstown Community Center Renovations	$0	$200,000	$0	$0	$0	Northwest
Loch Raven Center Renovations	$500,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	Central
Subtotal for Park Rehabilitation	$2,200,000	$800,000	$0	$0	$0	$0

Capital Improvement Plan: Park Development, Multi-Site Programs

Job Name	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	RPD GROUP
Local Park Comprehensive Enhancement Program (future sites TBD, based on need)	$200,000	$2,000,000	$2,500,000	$2,800,000	$3,000,000	All
Boat Ramp and Pier Renovations, including Kayak and Canoe Launch Construction	$300,000	$500,000	$1,300,000	$1,300,000	$1,000,000	East, Southeast
Park Accessibility Enhancements Program	$400,000	$0	$400,000	$400,000	$400,000	All
Trail Renovations and Construction (future sites TBD)	$700,000	$1,100,000	$1,300,000	$1,300,000	$1,300,000	All
Park Signage Program	$0	$1,000,000	$300,000	$300,000	$300,000	All
Subtotal for Multi-Site Development	$1,600,000	$4,600,000	$5,800,000	$6,100,000	$6,000,000	

Note: Project priorities and funding amounts are subject to change.

Capital Improvement Plan: Park Rehabilitation, Multi-Site Programs

Job Name	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	RPD GROUP
General Park and Facility Renovations and Repairs	$1,600,000	$500,000	$1,300,000	$1,300,000	$1,300,000	All
Synthetic Turf Field Surface Replacement Program	$0	$200,000	$0	$0	$1,700,000	All
Athletic Field and Ball Diamond Lighting Construction and Retrofit Program	$2,900,000	$0	$1,200,000	$1,200,000	$1,200,000	All
Ball Diamond Refurbishment Program	$800,000	$800,000	$900,000	$900,000	$900,000	All
Athletic Field and Ball Diamond Rebuild Program	$1,200,000	$0	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	All
Playground Replacement Program	$2,000,000	$1,800,000	$2,000,000	$2,000,000	$2,000,000	All
Sports Court Renovations Program	$2,000,000	$0	$2,000,000	$2,000,000	$2,000,000	All
Backstop, Safety Fencing, and Player Bench Renovations Program	$500,000	$400,000	$500,000	$500,000	$500,000	All
Subtotal for Multi-Site Rehabilitation	$11,000,000	$3,700,000	$8,900,000	$8,900,000	$10,600,000	

Capital Improvement Plan: Parkland Acquisition

Job Name	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	RPD GROUP
Park Acquisition Program	$7,900,000	$6,100,000	$5,500,000	$6,000,000	$6,500,000	All
Subtotal for Acquisition	$7,900,000	$6,100,000	$5,500,000	$6,000,000	$6,500,000	

Capital Improvement Plan: Summary

Job Type	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
Park Development, Single Sites	$67,200,000	$34,400,000	$31,500,000	$18,200,000	$13,900,000
Park Rehabilitation, Single Sites	$2,200,000	$800,000	$0	$0	$0
Multi-Site Development, Multi-Site	$1,600,000	$4,600,000	$5,800,000	$6,100,000	$6,000,000
Multi-Site Rehabilitation, Multi-Site	$11,000,000	$3,700,000	$8,900,000	$8,900,000	$10,600,000
Acquisition	$7,900,000	$6,100,000	$5,500,000	$6,000,000	$6,500,000
Total Capital Improvement Plan	$89,900,000	$49,600,000	$51,700,000	$39,200,000	$37,000,000

 Note: Project priorities and funding amounts are subject to change.



CHAPTER EIGHT

NATURAL RESOURCE LAND CONSERVATION

8.1 Overview

Baltimore County utilizes a wide range of tools to protect the natural environment and preserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas. These tools include both laws and regulations, and programs and policies. The County's proximity to the Chesapeake Bay emphasizes the need for Baltimore County to be a stalwart defender of the Bay and its watershed, from its coastal resources, to the forests, wetlands, streams, rivers, reservoirs and groundwater.

The Baltimore County Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) was one of the first growth management tools to be employed within the State of Maryland, and has long served as the County's dividing line between areas where growth would be most concentrated, and where growth would be more limited in order to protect and preserve the rural character of the County. Many means for protecting and preserving natural resources apply both within the urban and rural area including environmental regulations such as those associated with stormwater management, protecting streams and wetlands through forest buffer requirements.

Other protections are more closely associated with one area or the other. For instance, agricultural land preservation efforts are almost entirely concentrated within the rural portions of the County, whereas the majority of capital resources for parks and other public infrastructure (public utilities, fire and police service, senior centers, libraries, etc.) are directed to the urban portions of the County where the majority of the population resides. Land use zoning is one of the most effective tools utilized by the County to maintain the separation of the urban and rural parts of the County. Within the urban area, residential zones tend to allow for a larger number of residential units per acre of land, resulting in higher residential density than the majority of lands in the rural parts of the County. The urban area also features the majority of commercially and industrially-zoned lands. Meanwhile, the rural lands outside of the URDL feature areas of resource conservation zoning that greatly limits permitted uses and ensures that the rural character is preserved. Commercial and industrial areas are very limited within the rural area and residential density is intentionally low.

Since 1987, Baltimore County has had a nationally recognized watershed improvement program that supports natural resource land conservation through stream restoration, shoreline enhancement and stabilization, reforestation, stormwater runoff and best management projects. Baltimore County has completed 80 stream restoration projects, 31 shoreline stabilization and enhancement projects, and converted 146 stormwater management ponds. In addition, 30 waterways have been dredged and the FY 18-20 budget included $4.5 million for the dredging of Bird River. Over 848 acres of non-mitigation reforestations were planted, with many such planting projects taking place at the County's parks. Challenges to this program include strengthening the protection of high-function forest cover and increasing environmental education and engagement efforts to reach Baltimore County residents.

Natural resource lands in the County and throughout the State of Maryland not only conserve and protect the environment, but provide invaluable natural resource-based recreational opportunities. Such opportunities are a hallmark of the State's park system, where the public is offered opportunities to enjoy such nature-focused activities as camping, hiking, mountain biking, picnicking, swimming, fishing, and hunting. DNR's Dundee Creek Marina in the Chase area of eastern Baltimore County likewise provides boating opportunities. A number of these same activities are supported at the City-owned, but County-situated, reservoir watershed properties. Numerous Baltimore County parks supplement these natural resource-based opportunities, at sites ranging from nature centers and parks (e.g., Marshy Point Park, Cromwell Valley Park, Oregon Ridge Park, Lake Roland) to the waterfront parks with boat ramps providing access to the Bay and its tributaries. Such parks and recreational opportunities support numerous natural resource conservation goals, implementation programs, policies, and initiatives.

8.2 Inventory of Protected Natural Resource Lands

Targeted growth and conservation areas are identified by Baltimore County with Growth Tiers and by the State of Maryland with Targeted Ecological areas.

The Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 protects natural resources—specifically water resources and the Bay. The Act mandated the establishment of "growth tiers" that dictate where public sewer service is appropriate and permissible, versus where the use of septic systems is permitted. The County's associated implementation program is heavily based on the URDL, which corresponds closely to Baltimore County's public water and sewer service area mapping. The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and associated regulations and policies also impact growth management policy along the County's shorelines.

Targeted Ecological Areas are lands and watershed identified by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as having high ecological value for natural resource protection. They are preferred for conservation funding through the Stateside Program Open Space.

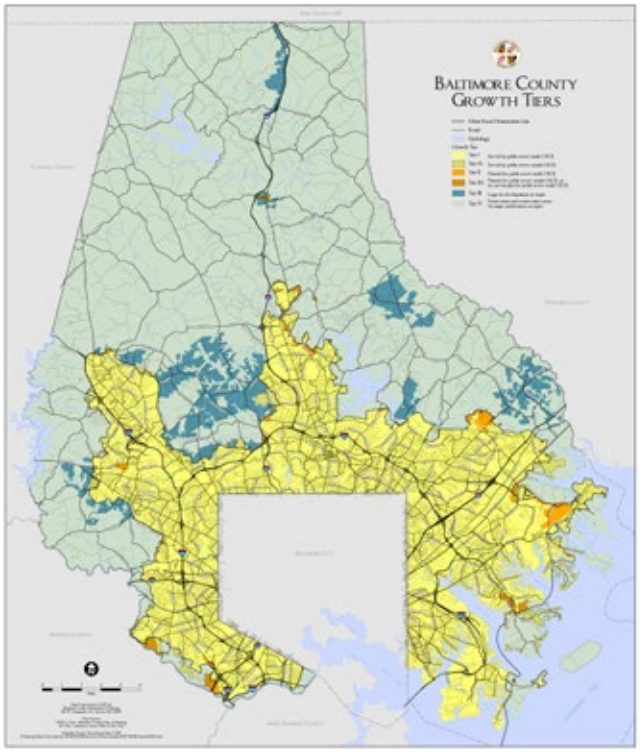


Figure 117. Baltimore County Growth Tiers

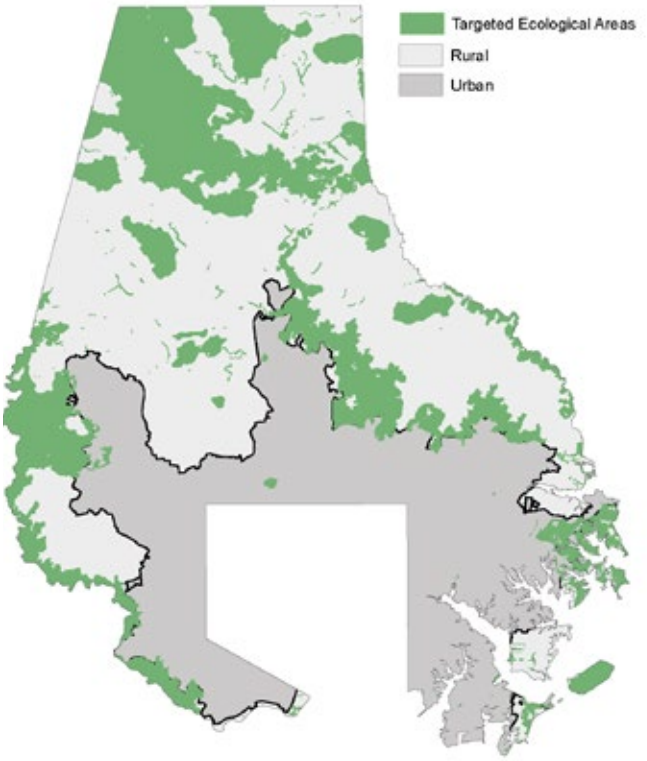


Figure 118. Targeted Ecological Areas

Conservation easements limit the use of property in order to protect the natural resource and agricultural value of the land. These are used in Baltimore County, with easements made to the County, the Federal and State Governments, and Non-Governmental Organizations, which are typically Land Trusts. In Baltimore County, some of the land trusts holding easements are the Manor Conservancy, the Long Green Valley Conservancy, the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy, the Land Preservation Trust, and the Maryland Environmental Trust.

In Baltimore County, there are 1,149 parcels with conservation easements, totaling 67,801 acres.

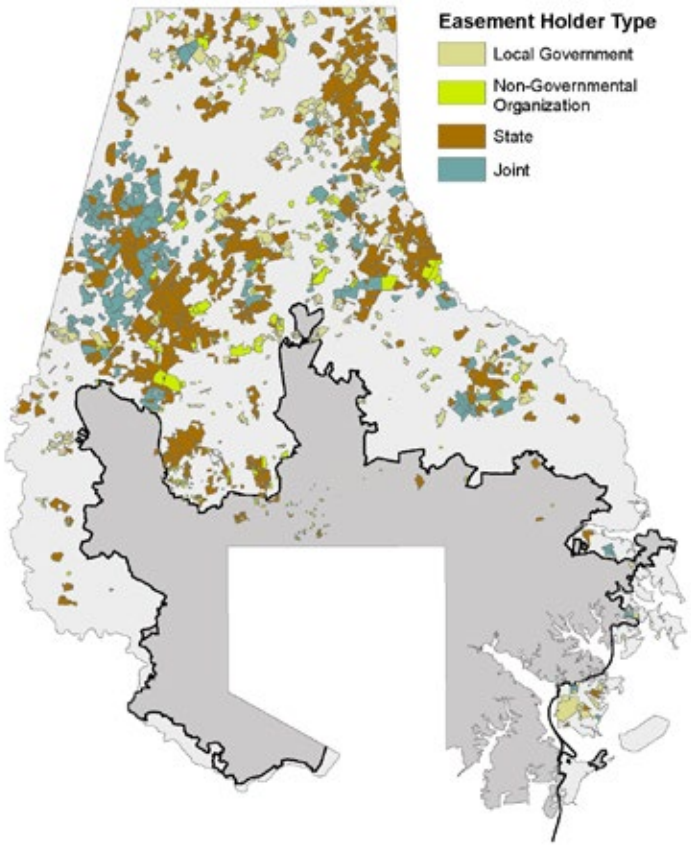


Figure 119. Baltimore County Conservation Easement Holders

Table 10. Easement Holders by Category

Easement Holder Type	Parcel Count	Acres
Local Government	173	10,263
Non-Governmental Organization	274	5,697
State	544	38,330
Joint	158	13,511
Sum	**1,149**	**67,801**

Additional information about protected natural resources lands throughout the Maryland is maintained by the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). GIS datasets can be downloaded from the DNR Geospatial Data Center or the Maryland GIS Data Catalog. The datasets include:

- State protected public lands (DNR owned lands and conservation easements)
- Campgrounds on DNR lands
- General points of interest on DNR lands -includes playgrounds, picnic areas, scenic vistas/views
- Public parking areas at DNR lands, including trailhead parking
- Maintained structures on DNR lands such as restrooms, shelters and pavilions
- Maintained roads on DNR lands
- Public land and water trails
- Public water access locations (boat ramps and canoe/kayak launches)
- Public hunting areas on DNR lands
- Public fishing sites

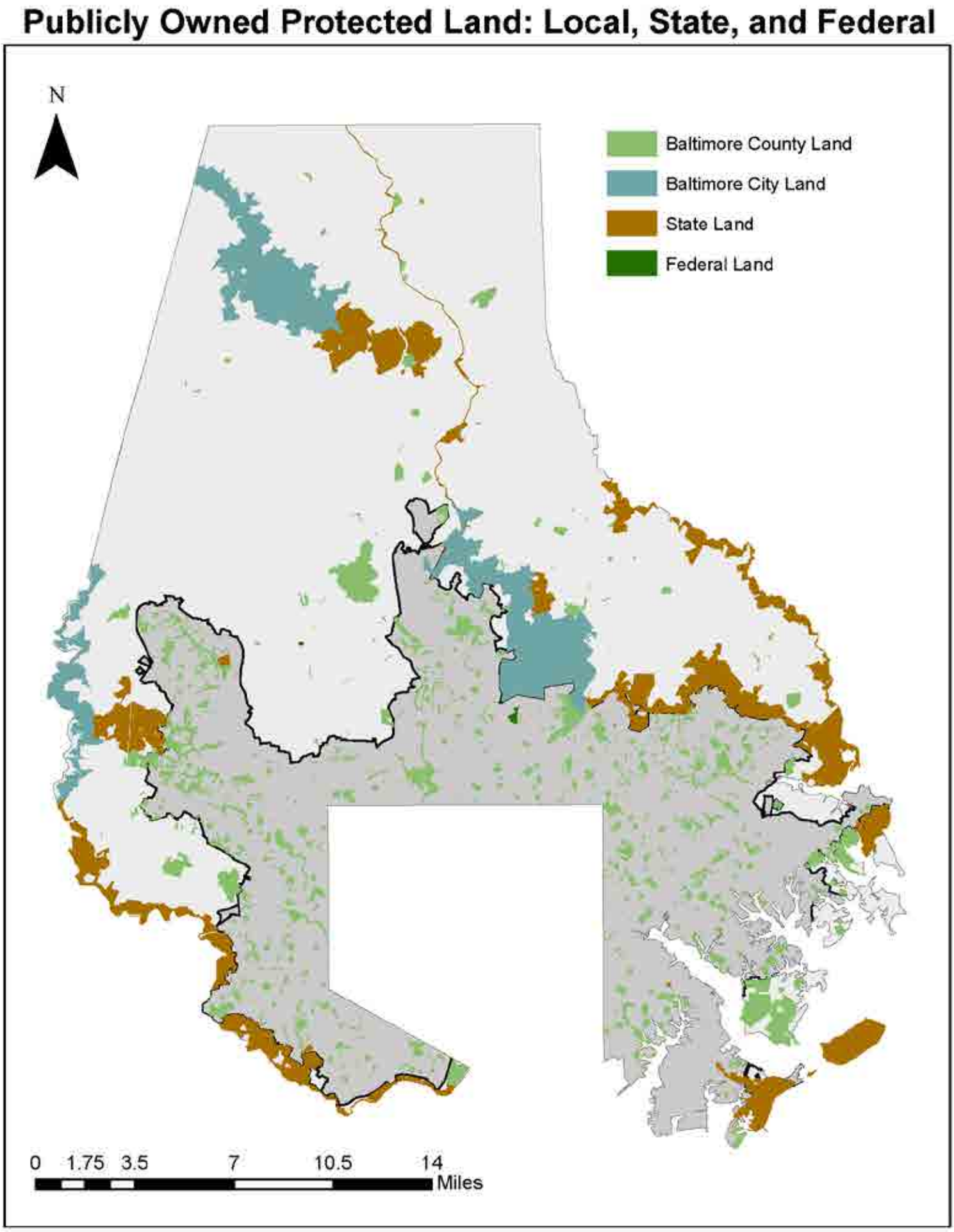


Figure 120. Publicly Owned Protected Land: Local, State, and Federal

8.3 Implementation Programs

Following are descriptions of the majority of the County's natural resource conservation implementation programs, summarized by topic, followed by various program evaluations.

Protection, Restoration, and Management of Tree Canopy and Forest Resources

Roughly 43.4% (169,400 acres) of Baltimore County are within forested areas or under tree canopy. Of the forested land within the County, about 25% is under public ownership. The largest forest blocks are located in the three Baltimore City-owned drinking water reservoir reservations, the Gunpowder Falls and Patapsco State Parks, Soldiers Delight Natural Environment Area, Lake Roland, Oregon Ridge, Dundee Saltpeter Parks, and Back River Neck. The remaining forest acreage is privately owned in smaller forest patches. This is significant from an ecosystem function standpoint because larger forest patches are more resistant to environmental and human-made stresses than smaller forest fragments.

An early historical pattern of clearing forests for agriculture and development, coupled with massive cutting for fuel wood and timber, made significant changes in both the amount of forest area (from 95% to as low as 15% in the region by 1870) and the health and vigor of the remaining forest patches. Although forest regeneration has increased the overall forest cover in the county, forest health and the sustainability of ecosystem functions is threatened by a pattern of parcelization of wooded properties and the subsequent fragmentation of the remaining forest patches by new developments and roads.

Forests provide a range of free ecological services and socio-economic benefits. In forested watersheds, trees play a major role in moisture and nutrient recycling, while the entire forest ecosystem controls flooding and soil erosion. These functions, which protect both aquatic and terrestrial habitats for forest-dependent plants and animals from degradation, also maintain water quality and stream stability. They likewise provide the social benefits of peaceful open spaces in which to walk and observe wildlife, and support the range of forest products available for the needs of the human community.

Forest fragmentation has made conditions favorable for the proliferation of deer and the incursion of exotic, invasive plant species into forest patches. Climate change, specifically changes in temperature and precipitation, is expected to have wide-ranging effects on our forests, impacting tree growth, seedling establishment, and other forest processes that depend on adequate soil moisture. Potential changes to our forest ecosystems from climate change include shifts in the spatial distribution, abundance, and productivity of tree species. In addition, like fragmentation, climate change could increase the severity of forest insect pest, invasive plant species, and wildfires (Butler-Leopold et al., 2018).

EPS recognizes the need to broadly assess the current health and condition of the County's forest patches, to assess the types and degree of stresses on the forests. To that end, EPS continues to work cooperatively with state and federal agencies and environmental organizations.

Program Actions:

1. Continue to implement the local Forest Conservation Act as required by the Maryland Forest Conservation Act of 1991
2. Continue efforts to assess the health of forests and tree canopy within the county
3. Develop and ensure inclusion of reforestation policies in community plans and community conservation efforts
4. Continue to implement tree planting and reforestation projects in support of the County's water quality mandates and tree canopy goals by conducting GIS analysis of planting opportunities throughout the County to increase the County's green infrastructure. The analysis pinpoints specific properties where reforestation can help connect existing green infrastructure and restore and improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

Forest Cover

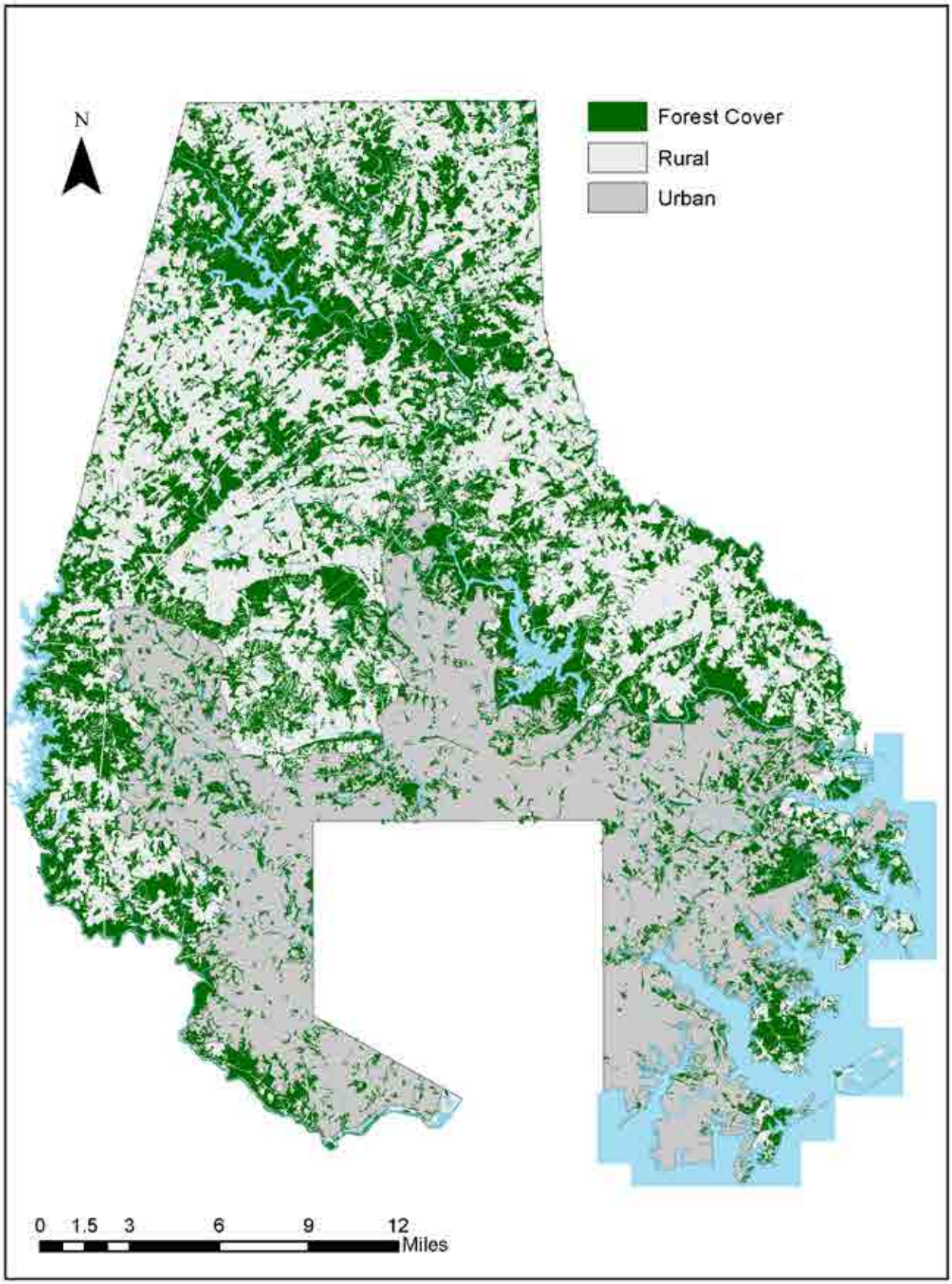


Figure 121. Forest Cover

Protection of Plant and Animal Habitats (Biological Diversity)

Many of the issues related to protecting plant and animal habitats have been discussed as important components of stream and forest preservation. Traditionally, another important habitat issue is the protection of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species. EPS takes a broad view in habitat protection, including not only the safeguarding of rare or significant species, but also ecological processes and functions that sustain habitats for upland, forest, riparian, wetland and aquatic plants and animals. This broader concept includes all ecosystem processes in the conservation of biological diversity.

EPS has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to verify the presence of the limited number of threatened or endangered species and their habitats that exist in the County. Many of the habitats for these sensitive species are protected through public ownership of wild lands and other environmental management areas such as Soldiers Delight, and through the public drinking water reservoir reservations and large state-owned lands along the Patapsco River and Gunpowder Falls systems. Any threats to sensitive plant or animal species elsewhere from land development are addressed through regulatory protection of the stream systems and priority forest retention areas.

Program Actions:

1. Continue to ensure that significant habitats are identified on development plans and continue to seek cooperation in protecting them through modification of site designs.
2. Seek to increase plant and animal habitat in conjunction with capital improvement projects for shore erosion control, stream restoration, wetland creation, and reforestation.
3. Work in cooperation with governmental and non-profit agencies to assess, protect, restore, and create habitats.

Protection of Forest Buffers

One of the County's most important regulatory programs is the comprehensive stream buffer regulation. Baltimore County's stream buffer requirements date back to the Water Quality Policy of 1986, which required 50-foot stream buffers. More protective buffers were recommended by the County's Water Quality Steering Committee in 1988. In June 1989, an Executive Order was issued that began a pilot for the revised buffer code that was adopted by the County Council in 1991. The County's regulations have been cited by the State of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay Program as a model for local stream protection. Features of the stream buffer regulations include that they (1) apply to all land development projects; (2) apply to all perennial and intermittent streams (field determined stream limits); (3) have variable widths, including minimum 75' for non-trout waters and 100' for trout streams, or 25' beyond greater extent of 100-year floodplains, non-tidal wetlands, or steep/erodible slopes within 150' of the stream; (4) are surveyed and recorded on Record Plats; and (5) require restrictive covenants designed to prevent disturbance of vegetation.

Protection of Reservoirs

The regional reservoir system, including Prettyboy, Liberty, and Loch Raven Reservoirs, provides a dependable drinking water supply for 1.8 million people served by the municipal water system in the Baltimore metropolitan region. A multi-jurisdictional watershed agreement was signed in 2005. While Baltimore City owns and maintains the reservoirs and drinking water system, Baltimore County has a responsibility for the protection of the reservoir watersheds, two-thirds of which are located in Baltimore County. Baltimore City manages 17,200 acres of land surrounding the reservoirs, but this land comprises only 6% of the reservoir watershed.

Protection of drinking water quality is the primary purpose of these publicly-owned reservations; however, limited active recreational use is also accommodated, including fishing, boating, golf, a shooting range, hiking, and biking. Public concern about impacts of recreational use on water quality have resulted in the formation of public and citizen advisory groups and revised regulations governing recreational use. Careful management of the entire watershed area for the three reservoirs is important for maintaining the water quality of the reservoirs.

Both Baltimore County and the City of Baltimore conduct routine water quality monitoring on the reservoir waters. The City monitors the impoundment and the County monitors its tributaries. The reservoirs continue to be impacted by nutrient over-enrichment. In particular, phosphorus from sewage treatment plants, agriculture, and urban development is contributing to excessive growth of nuisance algae. The monitoring program is under review for improvements. All three reservoirs have Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for phosphorus. Loch Raven and Liberty reservoirs have TMDLs for sediment. There are also TMDLs for bacteria in the tributary streams of all three reservoirs.

The County participates in the Reservoir Technical Group of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council to provide technical oversight and tracking for the implementation of water quality programs to control phosphorus and sediment loading to the reservoirs. These activities are part of an adopted Action Strategy, revised in 2019, developed in conjunction with the Reservoir Watershed Management Agreement of 2005. Substantial progress has been made to protect the regional reservoirs, as documented in the Progress Report for 2016-2017. The Agreement also contains several zoning policies to maintain agricultural and conservation zoning and to not increase urban development zoning in the reservoir watersheds. Baltimore County has continued to honor its commitments to the Agreement, especially during the quadrennial Comprehensive Zoning Map Process, wherein zoning changes can be proposed by residents.

Program Actions:

1. Continue to participate with other area jurisdictions in the cooperative regional Reservoir Watershed Management Program, including participation in the Reservoir Technical Group for coordination of program implementation under the adopted Action Strategies and preparation of progress reports.
2. Continue commitments to restrict development in the reservoir watersheds.
3. Continue to implement non-point pollution control, stream restoration projects, and sewerage improvements.
4. Continue to prioritize implementation of projects to establish riparian forest buffers along stream systems in the reservoir watersheds in cooperation with private organizations and other public agencies.

Implementing Agricultural Best Management Practices

It is critical that farmers implement best management practices (BMPs) on the lands they farm, whether owned or leased. Landowners with properties within various conservation easement programs are required to have plans, as are farms within the Critical Areas. Through the use of BMPs they can reduce soil erosion and protect the water quality of the County's streams and groundwater. The County will continue to assist the agricultural industry through the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District in implementing soil conservation and water quality that protect the soil and water resources of the County. The County and Land Trusts will continue to monitor conservation easements to assure that landowners have required plans. The Maryland Department of Agriculture requires and enforces that all farms in the County must have a Nutrient Management Plan, if they meet agriculture income and animal unit thresholds.

Storm Drain Inlet Cleaning

The Department of Public Works and Transportation conducts storm drain inlet cleaning across the urbanized areas of the County. This is accomplished with the use of three large-capacity vacuum trucks. EPS determines the amount of nutrients, sediment, and trash removed through this maintenance. Because road surfaces typically contain the highest concentrations of water pollutants, the program contributes significantly to water quality, which is important to aesthetic and recreation uses of streams.

Street Sweeping

The Department of Public Works and Transportation conducts street sweeping across the urbanized areas of the County. This is accomplished with the use of eight mechanical street sweepers that have been in service since 2000. Beginning in 2022, two regenerative sweepers will be added to the fleet as replacement equipment. This new technology is proven to be more effective at removing the very fine particulate matter. EPS determines the amount of nutrients, sediment, and trash removed through this maintenance. This program contributes to improve water quality by reducing the amount of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus and reduce sediment from entering the storm drain system.

Education and Outreach

EPS has developed several public awareness initiatives for water pollution control and has worked with non-profit organizations, schools, and watershed associations to foster environmental stewardship and involve residents in restoration activities. EPS works with a contractor to develop and target its environmental awareness messaging and measure behavioral change. Further information on education and outreach is available in the County's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Annual Report.

Maryland Water Monitoring Council

Serves as a statewide collaborative body for public agencies and private sector organizations to help achieve effective collection, interpretation, and dissemination of environmental data related to issues, policies, and resource management involving physical, chemical, and biological water monitoring.

Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Program

Land development proposals are reviewed for compliance with the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Program. Baltimore County's program was enacted in 1988, following the passage of the Maryland Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Act in 1984 and the publishing of the regulations in 1986. This program encompasses all of the land within 1,000 feet of tidal waters and most of the southeastern peninsulas. Development and redevelopment of properties within these areas must address the amount of lot coverage permitted on the site, the amount of trees and forest on the property, and the controls on storm water runoff. Tidal and nontidal wetlands are required to have naturally vegetated buffers, which filter the sediments and nutrients in runoff. A Modified Buffer Area Program, adopted by the County and updated in 2015 to include non-residential areas, allows the continuation of maintenance activities and limited improvements within the first 100 feet of shoreline, known as the Critical Area Buffer, in mapped Modified Buffer Areas. This has relieved property owners of the burden of obtaining variances from the Critical Area criteria for minor development and redevelopment proposals. A map of the County's Critical Area appears on the following page.

Managing Groundwater

In Baltimore County, favorable geological conditions and plentiful precipitation combine to provide a valuable supply of quality groundwater that is used for agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial uses. About 10% of the County's population relies on groundwater as the primary source of drinking water. Approximately 36,000 wells are used to withdraw water for this use. In addition, there are currently 9 community well supplies in the County that each serves 25 or more users. The agricultural community also relies heavily on groundwater for domestic, livestock, and irrigation purposes. Industrial and commercial uses depend on groundwater to a more limited extent.

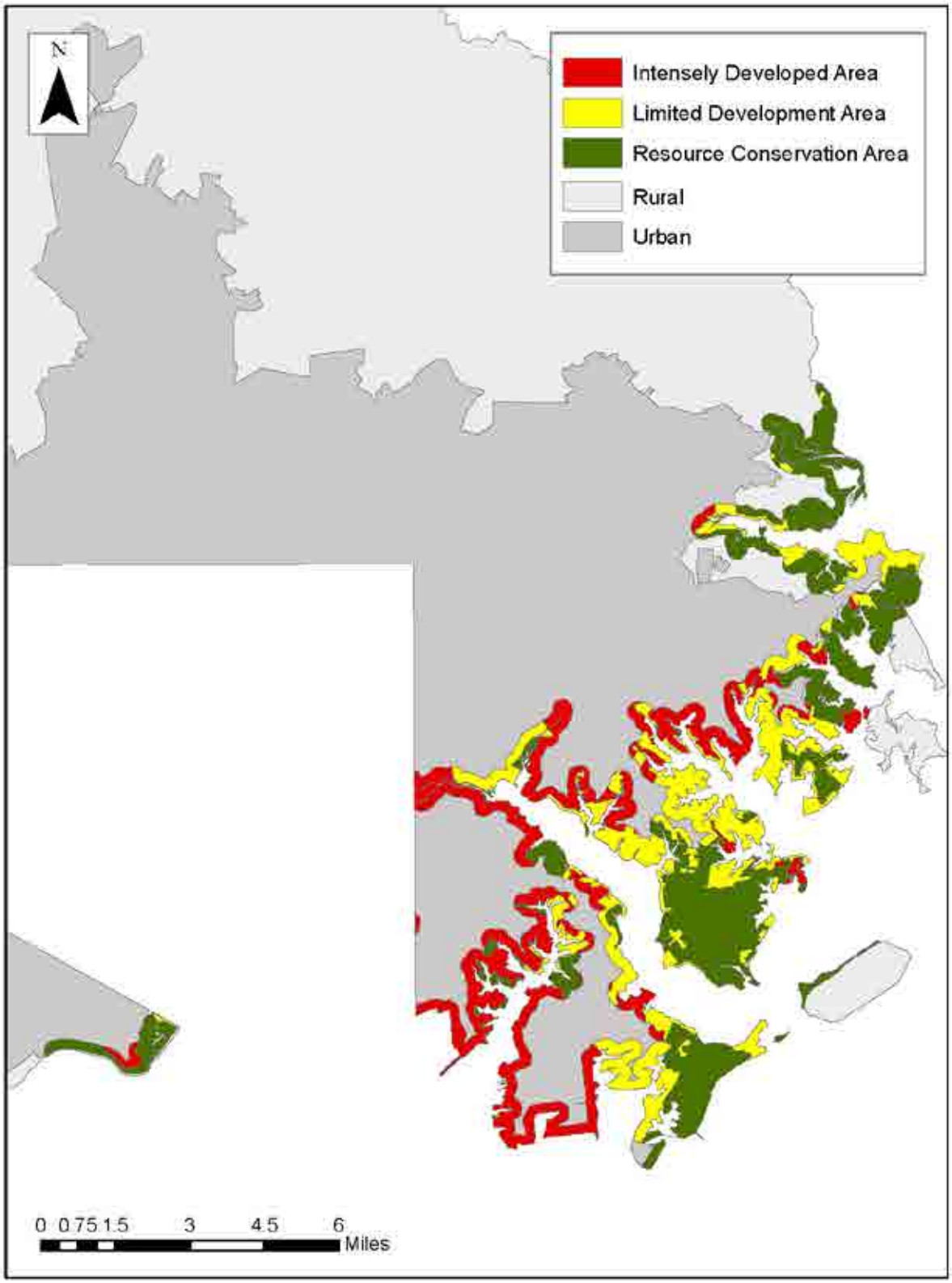


Figure 122. Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas

Demand for groundwater by well users occurs mainly in the northern half of the County in areas beyond the service area of the metropolitan water supply system. In order to protect the public health, it is essential to protect groundwater resources from contamination by petroleum products, septic systems, fertilizers, pesticides, road salts, and industrial wastes. Under state regulations, the County is responsible for review of all well permits for residential, commercial and institutional construction. Standards exist to assure that all proposed drinking water wells provide a sufficient quantity of water and are below thresholds for bacterial and nitrate contamination. Proposed on-site sewage disposal systems are regulated to assure that wastes will be adequately remediated in the soil and that they are located at appropriate distances from wells.

The current standards for drinking water wells and on-site sewage disposal systems are considered to be effective in protecting public health and groundwater resources. Failing septic systems occur primarily in areas that were developed prior to the establishment of these standards. In such cases, the County conducts sanitary surveys; if community health threats are documented in areas that are accessible to the metropolitan district, extension of public water and/or sewerage is provided on a long-term financing basis. In areas that cannot access the water and sewer service area, problems with private water and sewage disposal in small communities are hard to correct. Many rural areas, including the rural commercial centers of Hereford, Kingsville and Jacksonville, have limitations such as marginal soil conditions, small property sizes, area requirements for stormwater management, and zoning issues that impede improvements of sanitary facilities. Other groundwater contamination problems involve specific point sources of contamination, such as petroleum spills from gas stations. Federal regulations have resulted in a program whereby all service stations have replaced older tanks with new tanks that have enhanced protection and containment.

In 1998, Maryland Geological Survey (MGS) completed a comprehensive study of Piedmont groundwater quality in Baltimore County. A follow-up supplemental groundwater quality study was completed by MGS in 2002. These reports indicate that, overall, water quality in Baltimore County is generally of good quality. Although pesticides were detected at 70% of the tested sites, with 75% of the sites containing two or more pesticides, all pesticides were at very low levels and were not considered to present any health concerns. Chloride levels in drinking water wells were found to be elevated above background levels in many wells, with chloride levels commonly exceeding maximum contaminant level in wells that were in close proximity to paved surfaces treated with road salt. Most of the trace elements with known adverse health effects (arsenic, antimony, cadmium, and cyanide) were not detected. Elevated nitrate levels were attributed mostly to agricultural sources such as fertilizers and manure. Elevated levels of naturally occurring radionoclides (primarily radium) above drinking water standards have been detected in approximately 10% of the wells tested in the Baltimore, Setters and Slaughterhouse Gneiss formations. Baltimore County requires that new wells being put into domestic use in these areas be tested for radionuclide.

Program Actions:

1. Continue review of development proposals to assure the proper siting of drinking water wells and the location of on-site sewage disposal systems in accordance with the Code of Maryland Regulations.
2. Continue implementation of the 1993 Ground Water Management and Protection Strategy.

Waterway Improvement Program

Since 1987, Baltimore County has implemented a Waterway Improvement Program (WIP), a multifaceted initiative to protect and enhance surface waters in adherence to the directives of the Clean Water Act. Within the WIP are initiatives dedicated to Watershed Management and Monitoring, Watershed Restoration and Forestry Management. Each of these initiatives provide unique functions that collectively work to protect and enhance the County's waterways and associated landscapes.

This program is supported through the six year Capital Improvement Budget. Further information is available within the County's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Annual Report.

Watershed Restoration

The primary function of the Watershed Restoration section is to design and construct projects including: stormwater management facility retrofitting, best management practice implementation, stream restoration, shoreline erosion control, and dredging of navigable waters to protect and ensure resource quality of coastal and stream-side communities, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. These efforts are accomplished by reestablishing stream corridors, upland areas and shorelines with techniques that produce results similar to the function of natural ecosystems in order to reduce sediment, attenuate pollutants, and protect against erosive forces.

Surface water quality is a product of the water flowing in stream channels, surrounding land-use practices, and existing plant and animal communities. Surface water quality is affected by both non-point (pollutants carried by runoff, particularly from impervious surfaces) and point (direct discharges) sources. Non-point source pollution is varied and includes anything on the land that can be carried away by runoff: nutrients, sediments, metals, pesticides, oil and grease, salts, and other particulate and dissolved matter. Point-source pollution, such as from wastewater treatment plants, industries, and other sources with a direct, piped discharge, is regulated by the state.

Stormwater Management and Water Quality Improvement Initiatives

Stormwater management regulations are in place to control impacts that development has on the County's landscape and surface water. In recent years, increased attention has been directed to the impact of stormwater management on stream systems. These regulations are updated periodically to reflect the improved understanding of the effects of urbanization on the environment and the need for greater protection from the impacts of development. Created initially to protect downstream areas from flooding as a result of uncontrolled runoff, stormwater management can also erode stream channels when the stored runoff volume is discharged at a specific rate over a period of time. Solutions to this problem include:

- Planned revisions to the state's storm water management regulations to manage the discharge of more frequent storm events and provide better protection to stream channels
- Re-incorporation of the natural flood function into stream restoration projects where access to floodplains for the river are possible and where no downstream areas are susceptible to flooding damage
- Low Impact Development approaches wherein development is designed to increase the travel time and infiltration of runoff and to reduce the amount of impervious surfaces

Baltimore County maintains approximately 1,605 stormwater management facilities, many of which were constructed prior to current stormwater management regulations. Watershed Restoration section staff combat the pressures of urbanization on the County's waterways by identifying, designing and implementing retrofit projects that improve water quality within existing stormwater management facilities and at the end-of-pipe of storm drain infrastructure. These initiatives include converting dry ponds to extended detention facilities, creating baffling within stormwater management facilities, incorporating vegetation, and installing Best Management Practices. These practices attenuate pollution and improve water quality by:

- Increasing retention time and allowing more contaminants and sediment to settle out of the water column
- Mitigating nutrients by vegetative uptake,
- Regulating flows to downstream receiving waters which reduces volume and velocity that degrade natural stream channels

To date, EPS has completed 43 stormwater management retrofit facilities (installed ponds were previously none existed) and converted another 146 stormwater management facilities to improve ecological function.

Streams and Non-Tidal Wetlands

Natural streams are being degraded by land use changes in their surrounding watersheds. Baltimore County has more than 2,100 miles of non-tidal streams and rivers, including more than 1,000 miles of streams that flow into three reservoirs that supply the Baltimore Metropolitan area with drinking water. Additionally, the County has rivers and streams such as the Gunpowder Falls and its tributaries that are recognized as among the highest quality recreational fishery resources in the eastern United States. These streams and waterways are being degraded by increasing impervious surface due to urbanization, decreases in vegetation, channelization, building of infrastructure within the stream valley, floodplain encroachment, draining and filling of wetlands, removal of riparian vegetation, and development and agricultural practices such as regrading landscapes and forest clearing.

Over the past 30 years, Watershed Restoration section staff have developed expertise in the restoration of degrading stream channels. While generally unable to return a stream to its historical, unaltered condition, Watershed Restoration section implements projects that stabilize the system and improve ecological functionality and water quality within the riparian corridor. This is accomplished by evaluating the existing conditions within the drainage area, and developing a design plan that conveys a range of channel flows while reducing erosive forces and maintaining aquatic habitat. Strategically placed structures made of natural materials and native vegetation may be utilized to stabilize streambed and streambanks, and protect infrastructure. Reconstruction of channels employing the concept of natural channel stability and/or floodplain reconnection is a cost-effective and sustainable way to achieve physical stability, ecological function, and improved habitat to degraded riparian corridors. The County has completed 80 projects to date with an additional 16 projects currently under design.

A stream system consists of a stream and its associated floodplain, wetlands, and springs. Streamside non-tidal wetlands and riparian areas are essential to the maintenance of stream flow, the removal of pollutants, and the quality of aquatic and terrestrial habitat. Riparian vegetation plays an essential role in the natural functioning of a stream system, including maintaining base flow, regulating water temperature, attenuating pollution, and providing habitat. Other recreational uses of stream and wetland systems include nature activities such as camping, hiking, bird-watching, and photography. Not only does the County need to protect the good-quality streams, it is imperative that degraded systems are restored to an ecologically-functional resource.



Figure 123. Scotts Level Branch, before and after one of the County's stream restoration projects

Tidal Areas

The County's waterfront includes several large tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay, including the Patapsco River, Back River, Middle River, Gunpowder River, and Bird River. The County's waterfront includes 26 County-owned and two State-owned waterfront parks. Some of the County's oldest communities are located along the shoreline; historical patterns of development resulted in the shoreline being divided into multiple, small acreage lots. Most of the County's Chesapeake Bay shoreline is privately owned. This limits bay access to individual lot owners and impacts the shoreline with a non-cohesive assortment of piers, bulkheads, and other structures. The desire for access to the Bay is continuing and has increased development pressures along the shoreline.

Baltimore County implements shore erosion control projects, which stabilize eroding shoreline with vegetated marshes and/or structural protection measures to attenuate erosive wave energy. With the use of natural vegetation for stabilization, the County is demonstrating to citizens an alternative shoreline protection measure from the typical "hard" practices such as rock armoring or wood bulkheads. This technique requires minimal maintenance and performs better as time progresses and vegetation multiples, therefore it tends to provide a long-term, ecologically functional solution. The County has completed 31 shore erosion control projects to date, including many located in waterfront parks. An additional six projects are in planning and design stages.

Recreational boating contributes over $200 million a year to the County's economy. The County recognizes the importance of boating and is committed to providing a safe and clean environment. One component is a dredging program for the maintenance of existing boat channels in creeks and boat access "spurs" from these channels to individual waterfront properties. Baltimore County encourages the use of group piers as an alternative to private piers. A single point of access to the water can serve multiple households, thereby minimizing disruption of the shoreline.

Dredging permits require that the County implement controls to help prevent future runoff of sediment and nutrients to the dredged channels. Because submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is considered a key indicator of the general health of a waterway, Baltimore County collects SAV data for all creeks that have been dredged. SAV growth has rebounded in many of the County's waterways; the County has been documenting and mapping these trends since 1989. This data provides necessary information to satisfy State and Federal permit requirements and to better understand SAV growth and limiting factors.

Climate Resilience

Maryland DNR describes resilience as "the ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand— and rapidly recover from— disruption due to emergencies. This ability to overcome is a concept that applies to individuals, to communities large and small, to our infrastructure, and to the environment." Much attention is being given to climate resilience, which pertains to preparing for and addressing potentially damaging situations and scenarios brought about by general climatological changes and natural disasters. A particular segment of climate resilience is coastal resilience, which is of special significance to jurisdictions such as Baltimore County that have extensive shorelines and coastal areas. Hurricanes, tropical storms, nor'easters, and storm surges experienced over the past fifty years have provided reminders of the vulnerability of low-lying coastal areas along the County's shorelines.

There are myriad complexities associated with climate resilience, and a multi-tier approach is required to protect lives, livelihoods, and both public and private property. Regulatory mechanisms, such as those associated with the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, restrictive zoning, growth tiers, forest and wetland buffers, stormwater management, forest conservation, and flood zone construction requirements, help to ensure that the built environment is constructed/developed in a manner that makes it less vulnerable to natural disasters. Additionally, numerous County capital programs associated with infrastructure have been created to enhance climate and coastal resilience, including stream and shoreline restoration, storm drain, stormwater management and general drainage, sanitary retrofit, and reforestation/afforestation programs. Preservation efforts within the County's Coastal Rural Legacy Area have protected vast areas of natural resources and the forest ecosystems that play an invaluable role in water filtration and drainage. Finally, Baltimore County has crafted an updated Hazards Mitigation Plan and Emergency Operations Plan in order to most effectively respond to various types of adverse situations including natural disasters.

8.4 Evaluation of Implementation Programs

Following is a general evaluation of the various implementation programs.

Evaluation of Forest Resources

The County prepares annual reports to the State Department of Natural Resources that evaluates the implementation of the Forest Conservation Regulations. Results of the most recently available report for Fiscal Year 2020 indicated that development projects encompassed 165.9 acres of forest, 25% of the forest was retained and protected in Forest Conservation Easements. In cases where forest was not retained, no afforestation was required and 0.6 acres of mitigation banking were required. On 23 developments, fees-in-lieu were required totaling $286,691.21. Fees-in-lieu are used to plant and maintain mitigation reforestations throughout the County, typically on public land. This information was examined and evaluated through the County's Forest Conservation Annual Report submitted to DNR.

Evaluation of Watershed Management Strategy

Baltimore County shall continue the systematic assessment of land use and water quality within all of its watersheds. As part of this process, the County shall prioritize restoration projects, such as stream restorations and stormwater management facility upgrades, in watersheds having water quality impairments and opportunities for measurable water quality improvement exist. Nutrient, sediment and other pollutant removals resulting from projects are tracked and credited toward current requirements. The details of this program are contained in the NPDES-MS4 Annual Report.

Evaluation of Education and Outreach

Baltimore County has developed environmental outreach messaging for water quality, especially targeting human-behavior pollutants such as litter and pet waste. Effectiveness of outreach efforts on pollutant reduction remains challenging to quantify. The programs are being evaluated using water quality monitoring data, as available/appropriate, and limited surveys of residents. EPS is exploring other options for measuring effectiveness and is pursuing a contract to assist.

Evaluation of Stormwater Protection Strategies

Baltimore County operates a comprehensive stormwater management program. EPS has always taken a firm stand on requiring water quality treatment even when quantity management was not required. With the implementation of the new stormwater regulations EPS continues to require all projects to explore and implement methods for water quality treatment. It is more fully described and evaluated in the NPDES Municipal Stormwater Discharge Permit Annual Report.

Evaluation of Other Regulatory/ Management Strategies

Protection of Forest Buffers: The County has three people dedicated to investigate citizen complaints, complete inspections, and monitor Forest Buffers. The staff has created a tracking database in order to better protect the protected resources. While it is clear that this program is highly successful in keeping development out of the most critical areas adjacent to waterways, additional staff and better tracking and monitoring of these buffers will provide data to better evaluate the program.

Protecting the Reservoirs: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency presented the 2005 Source Water Protection award to Baltimore County. The award was for consistently demonstrating commitment to leadership and innovation in drinking water protection. The county's aggressive land preservation programs, restrictive zoning, educational outreach, and water quality monitoring and enforcement programs were all elements in receiving this distinction.

Implementing Agricultural Best Management Practices: The Baltimore County Soil Conservation District in cooperation with Baltimore County is evaluating the effectiveness of its programs in providing conservation planning to the landowners in the County.

This effort is ongoing. Preliminary results have indicated a significant backlog in the development and updating of conservation plans, trend for more non-commodity farm operations (small equine operations) with special needs. With respect to the evaluation of the implementation of nutrient management plans, University of Maryland Extension, private consultants and farm operators primarily develop the plans. This effort is supported by one field person and training assistance from the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, Baltimore County. Deadlines have been set for either having a plan or having a letter of intent.

Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Program: The County prepares semi-annual reports to the Critical Area Commission for the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays on the evaluation of the Critical Area regulations. These reports are available at EPS.

Storm Drain Inlet Cleaning: See NPDES - Municipal Stormwater Discharge Permit, Annual Report.

Stormwater Management Facilities: See NPDES - Municipal Stormwater Discharge Permit, Annual Report.

Illicit Discharge, Detection and Elimination: See NPDES - Municipal Stormwater Discharge Permit, Annual Report.

8.5 Natural Resource Conservation Goals

The State of Maryland's natural resource conservation goals are:

- Identify, protect and restore lands and waterways in Maryland that support important aquatic and terrestrial natural resources and ecological functions, through combined use of the following techniques:
  - Public land acquisition and stewardship;
  - Private land conservation easements and stewardship practices through purchased or donated easement programs;
  - Local land use management plans and procedures that conserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas and minimize impacts to resource lands when development occurs;
  - Incentives for resource-based economies that increase the retention of forests, wetlands or agricultural lands;
  - Avoidance of impacts on natural resources by publicly funded infrastructure development projects; and
  - Appropriate mitigation response, commensurate with the value of the affected resource.
- Focus conservation and restoration activities on priority areas, according to a strategic framework such as the Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs) in GreenPrint (which is not to be confused with the former easement program also called GreenPrint).
- Conserve and restore species of concern and important habitat types that may fall outside of designated green infrastructure (examples include: rock outcrops, karst systems, caves, shale barren communities, grasslands, shoreline beach and dune systems, mud flats, non-forested islands, etc.)
- Develop a more comprehensive inventory of natural resource lands and environmentally sensitive areas to assist state and local implementation programs.
- Establish measurable objectives for natural resource conservation and an integrated state/local strategy to achieve them through state and local implementation programs.
- Assess the combined ability of state and local programs to achieve the following:
  - Expand and connect forests, farmland and other natural lands as a network of contiguous green infrastructure;
  - Protect critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats, biological communities and populations;
  - Manage watersheds in ways that protect, conserve and restore stream corridors, riparian forest buffers, wetlands, floodplains and aquifer recharge areas and their associated hydrologic and water quality functions;
  - Adopt coordinated land and watershed management strategies that recognize the critical links between growth management and aquatic biodiversity and fisheries production; and
  - Support a productive forestland base and forest resource industry, emphasizing the economic viability of privately owned forestland.

The County's Master Plan 2020 established the following more generalized environmental goals for Baltimore County:

- Protect the County's remaining natural resources and promote the conservation of biological diversity,
- Restore lost or degraded ecosystem functions, particularly those related to watersheds and reservoirs,
- Foster environmental stewardship among county residents, and within the region.

These policies are implemented through programs of multiple County agencies, including the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS), Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), and Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP).

8.6 Progress Toward Goals

Baltimore County has natural resource conservation goals that complement the State of Maryland's goals by protecting waterways, forests, habitats, and species of concern. For example, Baltimore County's goal, below, to restrict development in reservoir watersheds, directly contributes to the State goal of using land use management plans and procedures to conserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas. Protected land within Baltimore County contributes to a statewide network that improves ecological and public health. Following are updates on the progress that has been achieved in the various areas of natural resource conservation. In some instances the goals have been revised to better reflect current policies and practices.

Protecting Plant and Animal Habitats

GOAL: Cooperate with nonprofits and agencies to assess, protect, restore, and create habitats.
PROGRESS: Since adoption of its Policy and Guidelines for Community Tree Planting Projects in fall, 2012, the Forest Management section of EPS worked with citizen organizations to review and approve dozens of proposals for planting trees on County-owned land. The Guidelines help assure that projects are well designed and maintained to assure long-term survival and to provide meaningful ecosystem and community benefits.

GOAL: Identify significant habitats on development plans and protect through modification of site designs.
PROGRESS: This is an ongoing task. The Environmental Impact Review Section continues to evaluate development plans and require modifications, where necessary, to protect significant plant and wildlife habitats.

Managing Baltimore County's Watersheds

GOAL: Participate in the cooperative regional Reservoir Watershed Management Program that coordinates implementation of the adopted Action Strategies and preparation of progress reports.
PROGRESS: The Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability continued to participate in the regional reservoir protection program. A new Action Strategy was approved in 2019 to update water quality efforts being continued and new actions to be taken.

GOAL: Continue commitments to restrict development in the reservoir watersheds.
PROGRESS: County agencies generally support zoning that provides the greatest opportunity for limiting or reducing pollutant loadings to local waterways during the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CZMP).

GOAL: Continue to implement non-point pollution control, restoration projects, and sewerage improvements.
PROGRESS: The County continues to implement urban non-point controls and restoration projects as reported in the NPDES - MS4 Annual Report in Section 10. Agricultural non-point source controls are reported through the State Department of Agriculture. Baltimore County continues to comply with the Sanitary Sewer System Consent Decree.

GOAL: Develop Implementation Plans for Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and track progress, ensuring recreational opportunities protected by the US Clean Water Act (fishable and swimmable) are available in Baltimore County.
PROGRESS: Baltimore County develops implementation plans for all new TMDLs within one year of issuance. They provide the road map for meeting TMDL reduction requirements, protecting Tier II waters (high quality), and meeting local water quality goals. Implementation Plans are updated periodically to reflect modifications to the Chesapeake Bay Model and implementation progress. Progress is reported in the NPDES - MS4 Annual Report in Section 10.

GOAL: Track pollution reduction for all pollution types, including nutrients, sediment, toxics, litter and bacteria, to measure progress on fishable and swimmable water quality protection and restoration.
PROGRESS: The County has developed pollution reduction-tracking processes for each of the pollution reduction types. These are detailed in the annual NPDES - MS4 report in Section 9.

GOAL: Monitor and control upland sources of sediment and other water pollutants carried to waterways as storm water runoff.
PROGRESS: Baltimore County maintains a water quality monitoring program to meet compliance with NPDES - MS4 Permit requirements. Stormwater control and restoration practices are tracked. For Monitoring see Section 10, for SWM practices see Section 3 and for restoration Section 9 of the NPDES - MS4 Annual Report. In addition, compliance is maintained on County industrial sites under Maryland's General Permit for Discharges of Stormwater Associated with Industrial Activity; sites include highway shops and school bus lots among others. See Section 7 of the NPDES – MS4 Annual Report.

GOAL: Expand public education and outreach to protect and improve water quality.
PROGRESS: Baltimore County has been developing targeted environmental messaging to various audiences. Pilot programs for anti-litter and proper pet waste disposal are yielding results and setting the stage for broader implementation.

GOAL: Continue to work with Baltimore County community organizations to promote watershed awareness and environmental stewardship.
PROGRESS: Baltimore County EPS provides financial and technical assistance to community organizations through its Watershed Association Restoration, Planning and Implementation Grant program. Grantees provide hands-on educational opportunities to residents, such as tree plantings, rain barrel workshops, and stream cleanups.

Waterway Improvement and Stream Restoration

GOAL: Continue to use watershed based approach to restore degraded stream systems to improve morphology, ecological function, water quality and aquatic habitat.
PROGRESS: 80 stream restoration projects have been completed to date.

GOAL: Continue efforts to protect shorelines from erosion, improve the water quality and improve habitat value of tidal wetlands.
PROGRESS: 31 shoreline stabilization and enhancement projects have been completed to date.

GOAL: Implement BMPs in the County's watersheds to meet local and Chesapeake Bay TMDLs.
PROGRESS: 29 BMPs have been planned to date.

GOAL: Initiate condition surveys to monitor the County's navigation channels and apply for dredging grants accordingly.
PROGRESS: 30 waterways have been dredged to date.

GOAL: Continue to monitor submerged aquatic vegetation.
PROGRESS: 33 waterways are surveyed biannually.

GOAL: Implement stormwater management pond conversions, retrofits and repairs to meet local and Chesapeake Bay TMDLs.
PROGRESS: 146 stormwater management ponds have been converted to date.

GOAL: Continue marsh monitoring/maintenance and examine potential tidal marsh restoration/creation projects.
PROGRESS: 3 tidal marshes are monitored and maintained.

GOAL: Explore beneficial uses of dredge spoil disposal including shoreline stabilization projects and tidal marsh creation.
PROGRESS: This effort is ongoing.

GOAL: Improve implementation procedures of the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Program while maintaining the high level of water quality and habitat standards.
PROGRESS: This effort is ongoing.

GOAL: Survey the tidal creeks and rivers of the County and remove hazards to navigation and waterway debris from the shorelines and shallow waters from May to October.
PROGRESS: This effort is ongoing, with removal of hazards and debris when reported or following surveys of the waterways.

Managing Groundwater

GOAL: Continue review of development proposals to assure the proper siting of drinking water wells and the location of on-site sewage disposal systems.
PROGRESS: Ongoing as part of the County's development review process.

GOAL: Continue implementation of the 1993 Ground Water Management and Protection Strategy.
PROGRESS: This effort is ongoing.

GOAL: Administering the Bay Restoration Fund grant program to upgrade septic systems to Best Available Technology (BAT) and connecting existing houses on septic to sewer when feasible.
PROGRESS: As of November 2021, over 570 septic systems have been equipped or upgraded with BATs and over 165 public sewer connections have been made for buildings previously on septic systems.

8.7 Natural Resources Recommendations

Following are recommended steps for improving the County's natural resource conservation program.

Green Infrastructure

- Improve the differentiation between the procedures for the protection of environmental greenways versus recreational greenways.
- Review the State Green Infrastructure Plan and identify any deficiencies in the ability of programs and program funding to provide the level of protection sought.
- Determine a system of evaluation for the progress of the program. Consider use of techniques used for evaluating the success of the Agricultural Preservation Program.
- Integration of the data from different programs that protect green infrastructure.
- Assist in efforts to identify green infrastructure priorities through the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition, a voluntary alliance of public agencies, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and conservation coalitions that supports the vision of expanding a connected and protected green infrastructure network in populous central Maryland from the Chesapeake Bay to the Piedmont.

Forest Resources

- Evaluate and update forested acreage within Baltimore County and determine the vulnerability of existing forest resources to conversion (non-forest cover).
- Continue to track the change in tree canopy cover to determine implication for the County's tree canopy goals and regulatory program for Chesapeake Bay restoration. The last mapping for tree canopy was done in 2016.
- Strengthen the protection of high-function forest cover through existing conservation easement programs.
- Continue existing and innovative programs to increase forested areas and tree canopy through reforestation on public and private lands.
- Continue development of cooperative watershed stewardship models for reforestation and forest health management.



Watershed Management

- Using Adaptive Management, review SWAPs and TMDL Implementation Plans as needed to incorporate new science and new regulation, and determine the effectiveness of the actions.
- Expand watershed awareness and outreach messaging throughout the County, especially anti-litter and proper pet waste disposal.
- Implement PCB source tracking program to protect recreational fisheries.
- Implement bacteria source tracking program to protect water recreation in streams and rivers.

Other Regulatory/Management Programs

Protecting the Reservoirs:

- Ensure adequate funding for land preservation programs

Implementing Agricultural Best Management Practices: Improvements needed for the best management practices are:

- Increase effort in developing and updating conservation plans to ensure effectiveness of the program,
- Assure standards and specifications are identified and details provided for Agricultural Exemptions granted by the District,
- Modify the program so that it can fulfill the needs of all agricultural land owners,
- Increase the support in the program so that it can be used to aid with the protection of the County's agricultural resources.

Education and Outreach Programs

- Measure the effectiveness of environmental education and outreach efforts in changing behavior and reducing pollution,
- Expand outreach efforts throughout the County.

CHAPTER NINE

AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION



9.1 Introduction

Baltimore County is currently certified for agricultural land preservation by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). The certification was initially set to expire on June 30, 2021, but was extended to June 30, 2023 base on changes made through HB620 in the 2018 legislative session. Baltimore County was found to be "consistently effective in achieving preservation goals." To maintain certification, the County submits interim reports each year, along with a plan every five years.

Baltimore County utilizes a variety of land preservation programs to meet the needs of its landowners and to advance a successful preservation effort. The programs are described below.

The first easements in the County were donations to the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) in 1975. The MET seeks to preserve lands through accepting donated conservation easements. Many easements are co-held with Local Land Trusts which also act as sponsors to Rural Legacy Areas. MET holds more easements in Baltimore County than in any other jurisdiction in Maryland.

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program was established in 1980. This program has been the core of Baltimore County's agricultural land preservation program. It provides for the opportunity for the County to match State funds and thus increase the number of acres preserved.

In 1994, Baltimore County created an independent Agricultural Land Preservation Program so that the County could augment the State program and be able to run its own program in the event the State program was not operational. The County added to this an Imminent Threat Component that permits the County to fast track the preservation of a farm in cases where the owner may be in financial difficulty or the farm is of such high value that it is desirable to preserve it immediately. . From 2007, the County enhanced the success of the program by using an Optimization selection technique that provides for the ranking of farms based on the best quality farm at the best easement price.

In all, over 100 square miles are under conservation and agricultural easements, which is about 17% of the County's total land area. This includes almost 25,000 acres protected by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and almost 12,000 by the Rural Legacy Program.

Table 11. Preserved Land Acreage Summary

Site Type	Acres	Square Miles	Percent of County Land
County Park	8,311	13.0	2.1%
School Recreation Center	3,721	5.8	1.0%
County Open Space	3,548	5.5	0.9%
Other County-Owned Green Spaces	2,365	3.7	0.6%
Reservoir	14,679	22.9	3.8%
State Parks	22,175	34.6	5.7%
National Parks	61	0.1	0.0%
Privately Owned Open Space	1,679	2.6	0.4%
Agricultural and Conservation Easements	67,801	105.9	17.4%
Totals	**124,340**	**194.3**	**32%**

Preserved Land in Baltimore County

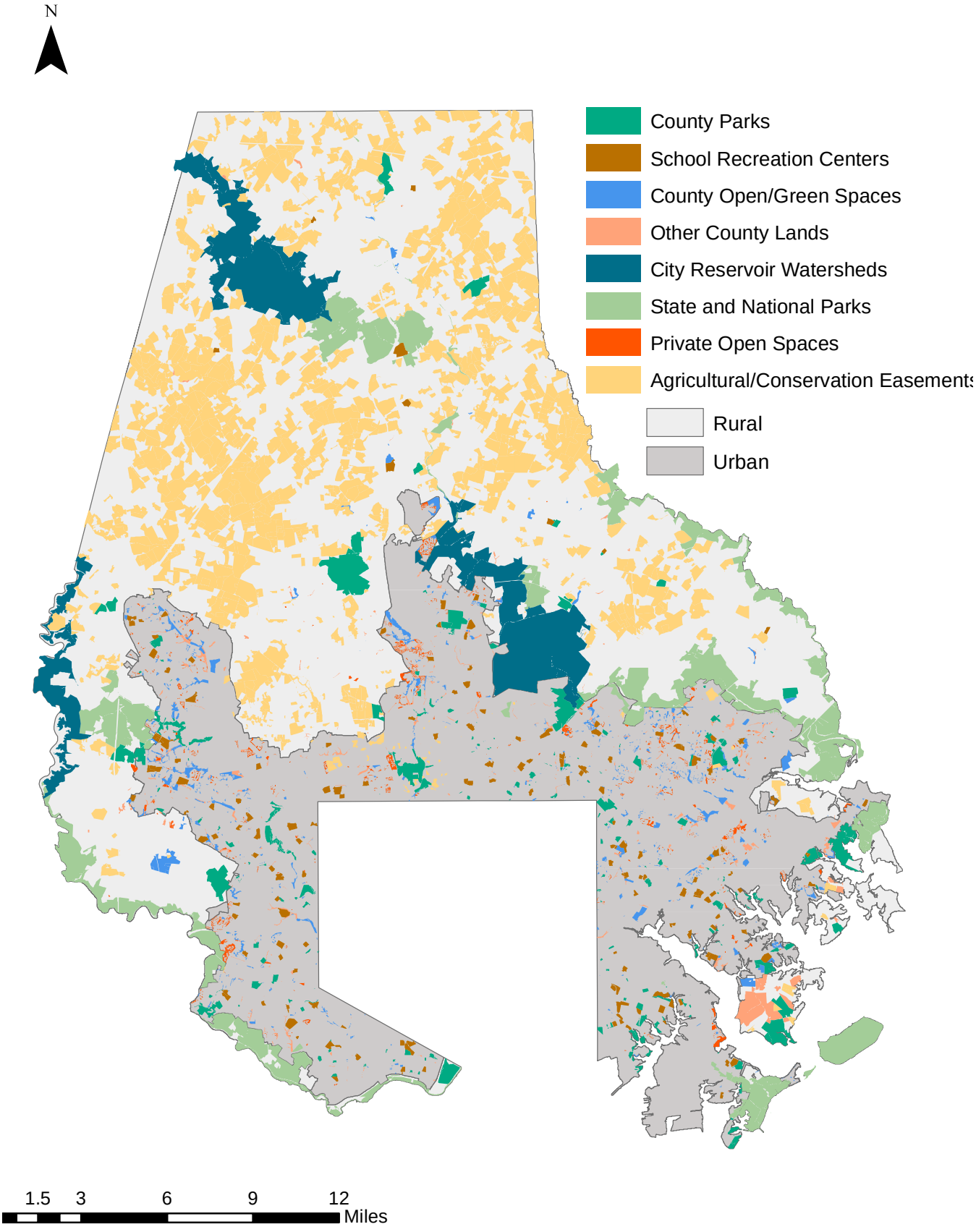


Figure 124. Preserved Land including Agricultural/Conservation Easements

9.2 Inventory of Preserved Agricultural Land

Baltimore County has adopted Priority Preservation Areas (PPA) for agriculture. These are largerly in the northern section of the county and all outside of the URDL..

Of the easements for conservation and agriculture, 62,251 acres, or 91.8% are located within the PPA. For the two major agricultural preservation programs, 24,557 acres, or 98.7%, of MALPF land is located in a PPA and 10,677 acres, or 89.7%, of Rural Legacy land is located within the PPA. These lands exist alongside lands classified by the Maryland Protected Lands Dashboard as local protected lands- protected open space, Maryland Environmental Trust easements, private conservation lands, and purchase development rights properties.

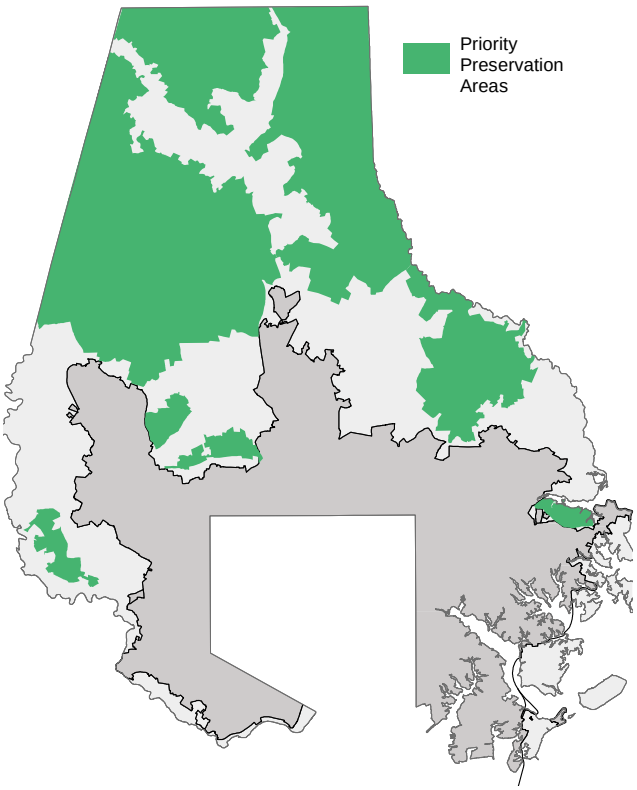


Figure 125. Priority Preservation Areas for Agriculture

Table 12. Protected Land inside the Priority Preservation Area

Maryland Protected Lands Category	Acres in PPA	Total Acres	Percent in PPA
Local Protected Lands - Protected Open Spaces	2,442	3,873	63.1%
Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation	24,557	24,871	98.7%
Maryland Environmental Trust	13,379	14,993	89.2%
Purchase Development Rights	6,437	6,519	98.7%
Private	4,759	5,637	84.4%
Rural Legacy Program	10,677	11,909	89.7%
Sum	**62,251**	**67,801**	**91.8%**

Easements in Baltimore County

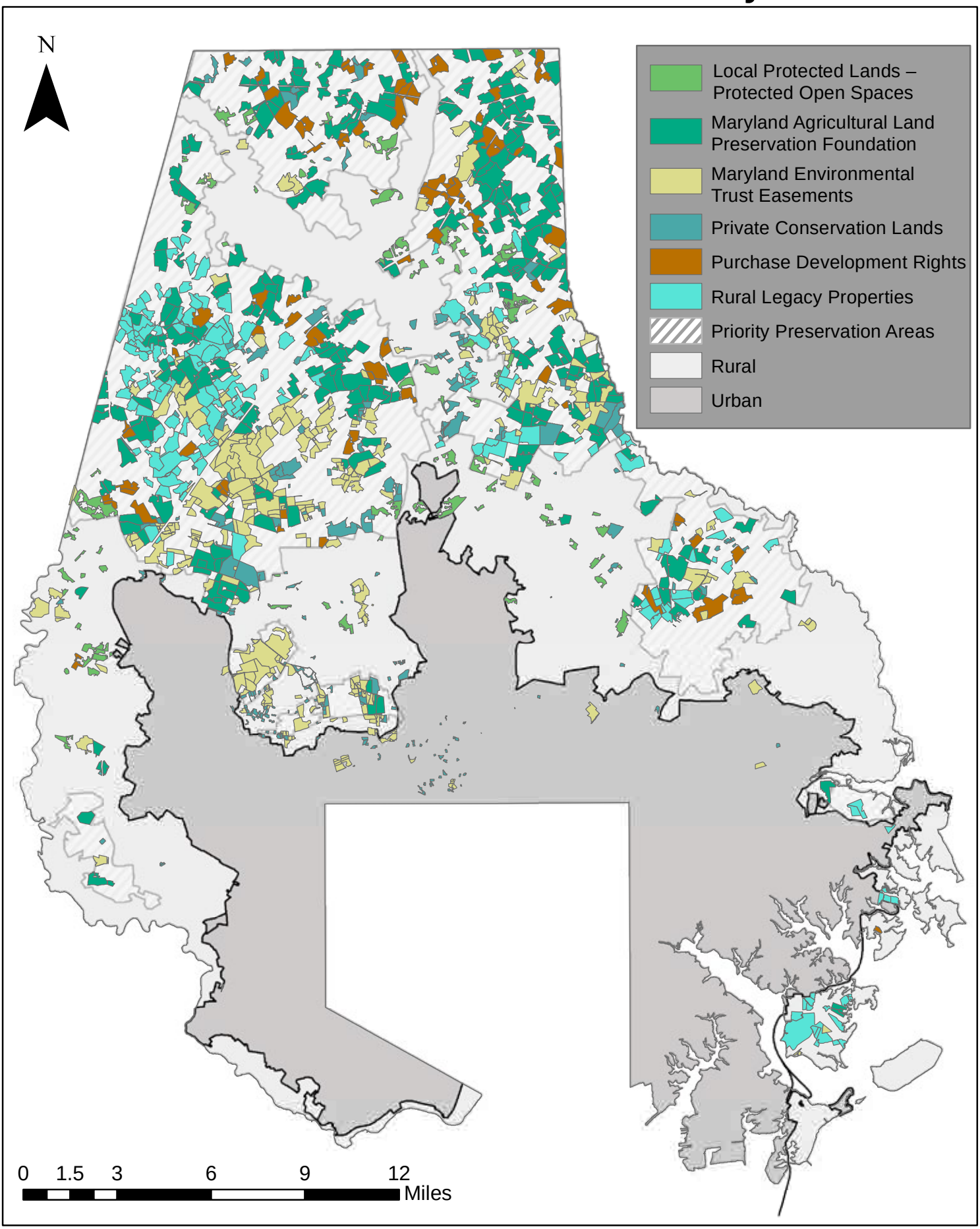


Figure 126.Easements in Baltimore County

9.3 County Goals and Associated Progress

The agricultural preservation goals of the LPPRP are derived from the County's existing agricultural program development strategy, and are therefore aligned. The goals presented in the 2017 plan and their associated progress are below: There has been continued progress toward all the non-completed goals set forth in the 2017 plan. The 2017 plan provided an update that the County had completed its goal of performing a study to determine how to reach the goal of 80,000 preserved acres of agricultural land.

Preserve Sufficient Land to Protect Agricultural Resources for Future Generations

Baltimore County has an overall goal of preserving at least 80,000 acres. Currently, there are 67,801 acres permanently protected through conservation easement, which is an increase of 4,046 acres from 2017, when the last LPPRP was submitted. The average number of acres preserved annually during this time was approximately 800 acres/year. This rate lower than anticipated; however, the rate is expected to rise given an increase in funding for State programs as well as County funding towards preservation which helped to re-engage the County Agricultural and County Rural Legacy programs to a level that has not been seen for several years.

Table 13. Preserved Land by Restriction Type, 2017 and 2022

Restriction Type	Count per Type - 2022	Acres - 2017	Acres - 2022	Change in Acreage
Baltimore County Agricultural Land	61	5,018	5,165	146
Federal Farm and Ranch Protection	22	2,505	2,517	12
Local Land Trust	273	3,994	5,637	1643
Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation	241	21,466	23,129	1663
Maryland Environmental Trust	302	14,736	14,993	257
RC 4	89	4,022	3,843	-179
RC 6 Primary	2	13	13	0
RC 6 Secondary	2	17	17	0
Rural Legacy Program	153	11,405	11,909	504
Transportation Enhancement Program	4	579	579	0
Sum		**63,755**	**67,801**	**4,046**

Incorporate Stewardship into All Aspects of Land Preservation Programs

All land preservation easements are monitored and inspected but at different intervals by different organizations. The County maintains records of the inspections on all County co-held easements. The County monitors and inspects all Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) on a 10 year interval in coordination with MALPF staff. All Federal easements are inspected annually with records kept by the County. The County inspects and monitors all County easements on a three year interval. The Land Trusts monitor and inspect all County Rural Legacy easements in coordination with the County. The inspections confirm that the conditions of the easements are being maintained including having a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan and/or Forest Stewardship Plan for the management of soil and forest resources.

Use Land Management Tools to Ensure Temporary Protection of Lands not Under Permanent Protection

The Agricultural Priority Preservation Area (APPA) is approximately 141,480 acres within the 2/3 of the County that is outside the PFA (URDL). If this area was to receive its share of single family detached (SFD) dwellings as determined strictly by percentage of the land area in the County, it would have had 38% of occupancy permits. In the five years between November 2016 and November 2021 only 9% of new SFD occupancy permits were in the APPA (205 out of a Countywide total of 2,263). While this is a slight increase from the 6% figure reported in the 2017 LPPRP, it is still well below 38% and shows slower development in areas designated for agricultural preservation. In that same time period, 75% of new unit active permits were in the URDL, which is only 1/3 of the County's land area, demonstrating that development is largely being carried out in areas that are designated as urban.

Foster the Agricultural Industry

The Department of Recreation and Parks operates the Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park, which consolidates many of the support services for the agricultural community, promotes the future sustainability of the agricultural industry, serves as an educational resource center and field destination for school children and adults, and provides open space benefits of walking and equestrian trail riding. The Center is designed to look and feel like a farm from the architectural design of the buildings to the presence of field and livestock operations. The Agriculture Center's mission is to connect our diverse population with their food, land and natural environment through educational opportunities, interactive demonstrations and authentic agricultural experiences.

Through the Department of Economic Development and Workforce Development, the County is establishing an Agricultural Advisory Council as part of the Economic Development Advisory Board. The Agricultural Advisory Council will be working to address agricultural sector challenges and needs from an economic perspective and working on strategies to support and sustain the County's agricultural industry.

Foster Regional Cooperation for Agriculture

Efforts continued to work with land preservation administrators in Carroll and Harford County to preserve properties that were adjacent to those counties.

9.3 Summary of Deficiencies

Baltimore County has not yet reached its goal of 80,000 acres preserved for agriculture, and therefore will continue to utilize County, State, and Federal Programs to advance toward that goal.

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