

## Chapter 16: Parks

### Goal

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*Provide an affordable, coordinated, and comprehensive system of active and passive, public and private parks, recreational facilities, and programs, and open space that will enhance our communities. meet the active and passive recreational needs of all citizens of the County and enhance community design, identity, and vitality.*

### The Significance to Carroll County

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Carroll County has approximately 11,760~~12,705~~ acres of public lands which are used for recreation to serve its population of 174,650~~168,089~~. These recreation areas range from scenic, natural places, such as Piney Run Park and the land around Liberty Reservoir, to high activity parks such as Taneytown Memorial Park. Included in these almost 132,000 acres are school sites whose playing fields are used by the entire community, reservoir areas that abound with hiking, fishing, and other recreational opportunities, state park lands in the county, and municipal parks. With all of these opportunities available, the county has an average of .07567 acres of publicly-owned park land or open space per person (or 67-75 acres of park land per 1,000 people).

Many of the acres considered park land or open space are either existing or proposed school sites or existing or planned public water supply reservoirs, the acreage around which is protected to ensure good water quality. It is essential in areas that must rely upon surface water as their main water supply that reservoir sites be planned in advance of their need and that they be well-protected after their creation. Fortunately, this need has created the opportunity to develop low-impact recreational facilities, such as boating areas, hiking trails, picnic areas, and bridal paths on the land surrounding the reservoirs. A similar benefit has been derived from school properties which, by their nature, include playing fields and other recreational areas. The county's citizens often are able to benefit from and use these sites as part of a joint use agreement with the Board of Education.

"The Baltimore Region Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenway Transportation Plan" was prepared by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council in 2001. This plan outlines the vision, goals, and action plan strategies for bicycle and pedestrian improvements and programs in the Baltimore region. The Plan names two potential pedestrian improvement zones in Carroll County. These zones are in Westminster (Center Street, Downtown Westminster to Westminster Town Center) and Taneytown (Frederick Street). The implementation of this plan ~~will~~would result in a network of on-road and off-road routes that support bicycling and walking for transportation and recreation purposes.

There are larger facilities with multiple ballfields in the county, as well as numerous fields and tot lots in smaller parks around the county. These recreational facilities provide additional benefits as well. These include benefits to the community such as safe and convenient play areas for children, aesthetically pleasing green space that relieves the harshness of the built environment, and healthful means of exercise for all citizens. Recreational areas function as local landmarks, imparting a sense of community identity through design, location, and the creation of places where neighbors can gather. The natural environment also benefits from many park areas, which provide plants with habitat and animals with food and shelter when left in a fairly natural state. The advantages in terms of water quality in and around the reservoir areas have already been mentioned but cannot be understated.

## **The Challenge to Carroll County**

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Despite the fact that the County's land holdings currently exceed the acres considered by the State to be adequate for recreation, it should not be assumed currently available park land will be adequate for the future. The need for recreational facilities and open space cannot be estimated simply on an acre-per-person basis. Rather, it must be addressed through a comprehensive and frequent review of the county's demographics and the types of facilities that these statistics and the local recreation councils indicate as needed. For example, it will not help to have over 500 miles of hiking trails if there are not enough baseball fields to serve the current and projected members of the Little League teams. Each community may have its own individual and specific needs that are not addressed through the mere provision of a certain number of acres.

In the future, as the face of the county changes, ~~so will~~ its needs for recreation areas and open space may also change. The County should plan for and provide its citizens with a network of parks, recreation areas, and open space that serve the needs of the entire population to the greatest extent possible. This will require improvements and additions to the existing network. With the *2005 Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan*, the County was certified under Natural Resources Article 85-905c(i)(ii) as qualifying to use more than 50 percent of its Program Open Space (POS) allocation for development projects. The County qualified because it exceeded the minimum acquisition goal for recreation land of 30 acres per 1,000 people.

The majority of funding for parks and recreation facilities comes from POS and impact fees. Given the many services for which residents would like to see a level of service increase, parks often suffer when competing against schools, police, and other similar services for limited funds.

## The Choice: Policies & Recommendations

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The current State goal for recreation land is to maintain a minimum of 30 acres per 1,000 residents. By supporting the State goal, the County will retain its eligibility for POS funds. As of 2011, the County had approximately 67.75 acres of parkland per 1,000 people. However, calculations used to meet State goals for recreation only account for one third of land classified as natural resource land (such as reservoir buffer lands). This means that under State guidelines, Carroll County has 47.3250.55 acres per 1,000 people. Since the County currently exceeds the 30-acre State goal, there is room for flexibility to examine specific recreational needs not being met. The minimum acreage is not set higher to help prevent recreational facilities from competing with such higher priority facilities as schools and roads for improvements funding. Recreational opportunities are, however, recognized for their significant contribution to the quality of life in Carroll County.

Access to the recreational opportunities available to Carroll County citizens is mostly achieved via the automobile. One alternative to making recreation consumers drive to their destinations is the provision of a countywide trail system which would interconnect the recreational facilities present in the county, while also connecting towns, neighborhoods, shopping areas, and schools. This goal is included partially because the majority of the funding would likely not come from the General Fund. However, a reasonable and realistic milestone for yearly construction was chosen.

### Policies



The majority of additional park facilities will primarily be funded through impact fees, POS funds, and other non-General Fund sources.



The Planning Commission shall consider the location and development of recreational facilities and parks to be an integral part of community comprehensive plan updates.

### Recommendations

- A. ~~Locate designated~~ Link proposed open space ~~contiguous~~ to existing or ~~proposed-planned~~ open space on adjoining development ~~in order to establish scenic greenways~~, whenever possible.
- B. Explore mechanisms to incorporate recreational facilities, including multi-use fields, into development projects.
- B.C. ~~Ensure-Promote~~ recreational development in reservoir watershed areas ~~that~~ does not create conflicts with water quality protection.
- C.D. Encourage the creation of local land trusts for the purpose of accepting non-agricultural easements for recreation and open space and acquiring land for open space.
- D.E. Evaluate the existing impact fee structure for parks to see if the fee is adequate to ~~provide affordable cover the cost of public recreation facilities and parks. park facility needs attributable to new development.~~
- E.F. ~~As-Preserve~~ the Union Mills and Gillis Falls areas ~~develop~~ for passive recreational uses, ~~maintain certain areas specifically for low-impact recreation to ensure that this type of recreation remains available, to reduce the cost of park development, and to help preserve some of the county's natural and wooded areas.~~

~~F.G. Designate Identify public and private~~ recreation areas countywide that meet the projected needs ~~of a local area of the local and county populations.~~

~~G.H. Seek non-county (state/federal) funds for construction of greenway corridor trails.~~

~~I.~~

~~H. Explore the use of Program Open Space (POS) or other funds for fee simple or easement purchases of segments of identified greenway corridors.~~

~~H. Give first priority to connection of parks and school facilities with greenway corridors to improve access and to enhance their use as alternative transportation facilities.~~

## Fiscal Impact to the County

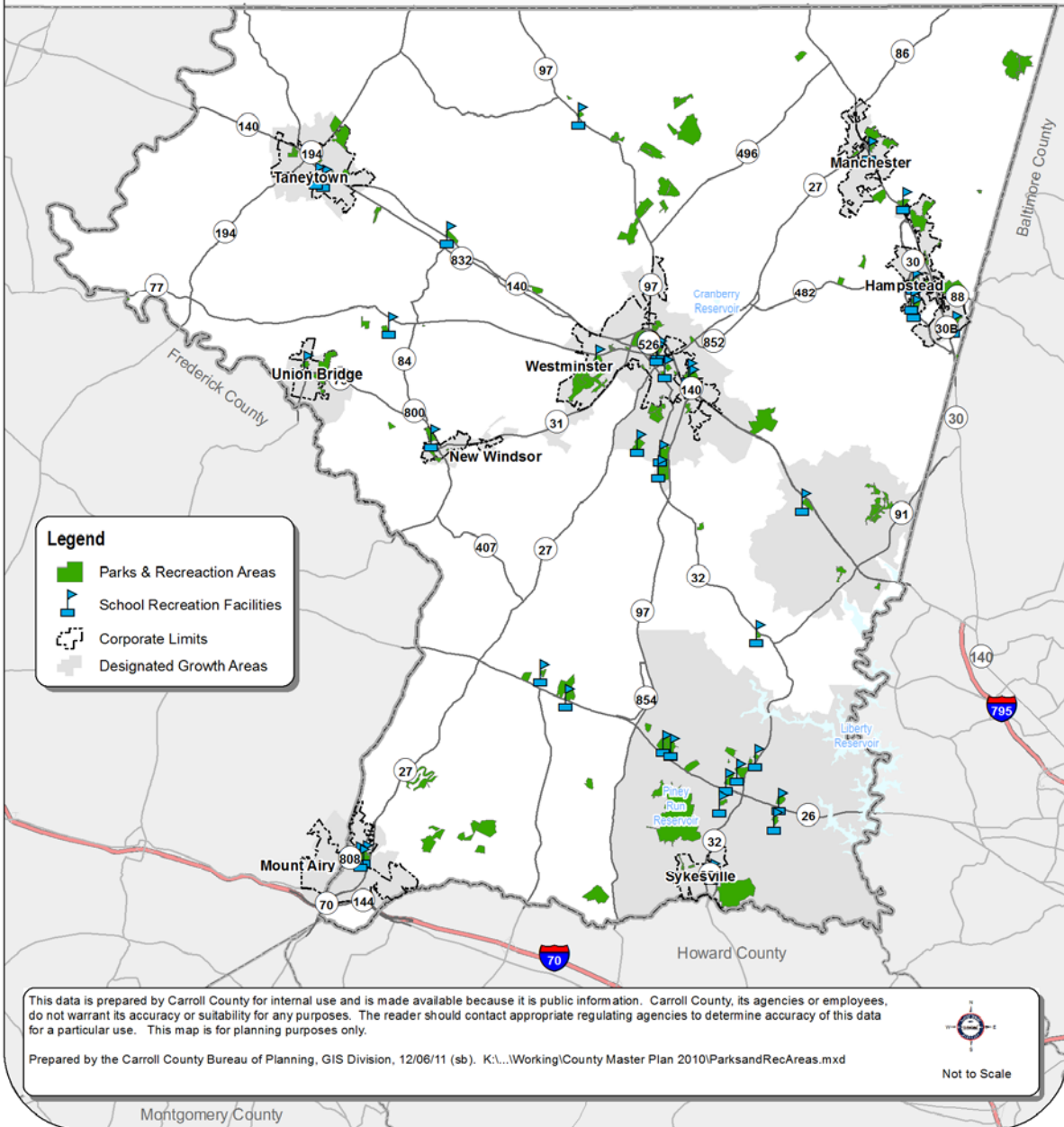
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The impact fee collected for Parks (\$533 per single-family house in 201109) and POS funds (\$2,593,974,557,001 for 201208 and \$166,434,333,000 in 201109) accruing to the County from the State transfer tax should help to fund a portion of the future park needs in the county. The County currently has sufficient acreage to meet the 30 acres per thousand ~~population people until beyond~~ the year 20350, but as the recommendations recognize, additional park development will be needed to ensure facilities are available in the growth areas.

~~As is the case with other recreation facilities, the trail system would be funded primarily by POS and impact fees. Additionally, because the trail system also benefits the overall transportation system, an innovative use of the Maryland Department of Transportation funding programs can be explored.~~

# Existing Parks & Recreation Areas

## Carroll County Master Plan



Note: This map can also be viewed at:

<http://ccgovernment.carr.org/ccg/compplan/masterplan2010/default.asp>