

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

Introduction

Community facilities provide a network of services to meet the physical, social, cultural, and protective needs of the community. Their success and quality help determine the community's desirability as a place to live and work.

The Community Facilities Plan makes recommendations for the Subregion's parks, trails, greenways, community centers, schools, libraries, safety services, regional services, and post offices. The objective is to reinforce the Potomac Subregion's sense of community—the social cohesion developed from a feeling of belonging to a local area and having an interest and a stake in what happens there.

Parks and Public Open Space

Background

With its location along the Potomac River and the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal, the Potomac Subregion is graced with generous public open space, a stream valley park system, and park land developed for active recreation. The Subregion has a significant amount of private open space, due to its predominantly low-density residential development, and substantial private recreational clubs and facilities.

The Subregion has over 3,400 acres of park land and open space, including State and federal parks, as well as a hierarchy of regional, community, and local parks. The County's *Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan* (PROS) describes this hierarchy, identifies needs, and makes recommendations to meet those needs.

Stream valley parks run to and alongside the C&O Canal and the Potomac River, creating park links through the Subregion's three planning areas and to the rest of the County. These stream valley parks serve as conservation and passive recreation parks. The main parks in the Subregion include all or part of the Cabin John, Rock Run, Watts Branch, and Muddy Branch Stream Valley Parks.

The Cabin John Regional Park, which is adjacent to the Cabin John Stream Valley Park, is the most intensively developed park in the Subregion and the largest in the Potomac Planning Area. This regional park includes one of only two publicly-owned indoor tennis facilities and ice rinks in the County.

The Subregion is also served by community-use parks that generally offer playgrounds, fields, and courts. The Potomac Planning Area has 20 community-use parks that are well-developed with active recreational facilities, including 16 playgrounds, 11 ballfields, and 14 tennis courts. Travilah has seven community-use parks that include five playgrounds, two baseball and two softball fields, nine tennis courts (five of which are lighted), and two football/soccer fields. The Darnestown Planning Area has four community-use parks that offer three playgrounds, two softball fields, three multi-use courts, four unlighted and two lighted tennis courts, and three football/soccer overlay fields. School facilities provide additional recreation opportunities when fields are not being used by students.

School fields are available for public use on evenings and weekends. They are often adjacent to local parks, expanding the recreation facilities available in the area.

Several outstanding State and federal parks enhance the Subregion's recreational options and natural resource protection opportunities including the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park. The park contains significant historical and natural resources. Most of the park's land is forested and provides habitat for several rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species.

Seneca Creek State Park is located on the Subregion's western boundary, which is formed by Seneca Creek itself. The park's 6,290 acres lie along 12 miles of the creek between I-270 and the Potomac River. The park includes a 90-acre lake and facilities for boating, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and hunting. Virtually all developed portions of the park are outside the Subregion.

Currently Planned Park Improvements

Park renovation proposals and planned improvements are reflected in master plans and in *Parks at a Glance*, which lists the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for fiscal years 1999 through 2004. The CIP outlines improvements, renovations, and acquisitions proposed in the Potomac Subregion. Renovations already funded or underway in the Subregion include a substantial renovation of Cabin John Regional Park, and renovations of playgrounds and other facilities are planned at several local parks.

The only new park planned for construction is Greenbriar Local Park. Facilities may include one softball and one soccer field, one basketball court, and a playground. Travilah Local Park is being developed in conjunction with the Traville development in North Potomac and will include one soccer field, one basketball court, and a picnic and playground area.

Active Recreation Needs

The active recreation needs for the Potomac Subregion are documented in the July 1998 PROS Plan. Active recreation needs are determined by calculations that consider the number and types of recreation facilities available, how many people use them, and an estimated demand for these facilities in the future. The plan identifies needed ballfields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and playgrounds for the Potomac, Darnestown, and Travilah Planning Areas.

There is a current deficiency of eight ballfields in the Potomac Subregion and that is expected to increase to 12 by the year 2010. The number of basketball courts needed increases from five to seven by 2010, and playground need increases from two to four. Tennis needs have been met through a combination of adequate supply and decreasing demand.

The PROS Plan indicates that recreation needs in the Potomac Planning Area have been met to the year 2010. In Darnestown, demand can be met by adding one ballfield. The greatest need for recreation facilities is in the fast growing North Potomac community in the Travilah Planning Area. Although recreation needs are determined by planning area, solutions may come from anywhere in the Subregion. For example, ballfield needs in Travilah may be met by vacant sites in Potomac because users will drive further to use ballfields.

Recommendations

These recommendations attempt to meet the demand for certain types of facilities and are based on the availability of sites to fill these needs.

- **Surplus and future school sites offer potential for fulfilling some of the recreation needs of the Potomac Subregion. All school sites not otherwise recommended in this Plan for environmental conservation should be considered for other public uses, including park land, if they are declared as surplus.**

The Brickyard Junior High School, Kendall Elementary School, and Churchill Elementary School could be developed as local parks with ballfields or other recreational uses. (Recreational uses should be evaluated along with other public uses identified elsewhere in this Plan to determine the priority use for each available site.) Any site acquired for parkland should be evaluated to determine whether it is appropriate for recreational opportunities (e.g., trails, ballfields, etc.).

- **Should any private schools close, examine the feasibility of property acquisition to meet PROS needs for active recreation or other public uses.**

Many private schools have active recreation facilities that could be converted to public use after acquisition. Each school would need to be individually evaluated to determine feasibility, suitability, and compatibility with the adjacent neighborhood.

Current and projected growth in the North Potomac area of Travilah indicates a need for another local or recreational park. There is a strong demand for ballfields and only one local park (Greenbriar) coming on line in the near future.

- **Examine all opportunities in the Subregion to create new parks, including the Hanson Farms site.**

If developed under the PD-2 Zone (see Land Use and Zoning Plan), and a community recreation center is located elsewhere in North Potomac, this site has the potential to include a hard surface trail connection, and a local park, accommodating two ballfields.

- **Examine all parks in the Master Plan for potential refurbishment and possible physical modifications consistent with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.**

Park Trails

The Potomac Subregion includes Seneca Creek State Park and three major stream valley parks (SVP) that currently include a variety of natural surface trails: Cabin John, Watts Branch, and Muddy Branch. These stream valleys constitute irreplaceable natural resources and all contain sensitive environmental features.