



WASHINGTON COUNTY,  
MARYLAND

2022

LAND PRESERVATION,  
PARKS & RECREATION  
PLAN





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## I. INTRODUCTION

Washington County's preserved lands, including parks, trails, waterways, forests, farms, and recreation facilities strongly contribute to the quality of life experienced by residents and visitors alike. The Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) presents a five-year vision for the County's provision of parks and open space. It identifies, and communicates to the public, how the County and its municipalities can build upon its current system of parks, facilities, recreational programs and protected lands to promote a sustained quality of life that is shared widely by all.

The Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan is one of several functional plans that support the goals and objectives of the adopted Comprehensive Plan for the County. The primary purpose of this plan is to identify areas where open space enhancements are most needed based upon existing resources, community demographics and anticipated impacts from growth so that a coordinated plan can be developed to address these future needs. This is important for several reasons including:

**Public Investment:** Investments made towards park lands, park facilities and recreation programs should be done in a timely and cost effective manner to support the growth of neighborhoods and communities by making the most of scarce fiscal resources and meet growing user demand.

**Interjurisdictional Cooperation:** The constraints described above provide an opportunity for entities from various sectors to work together in a collaborative manner on open space projects that serve people throughout the County and avoid duplication of programs, services, and facilities.

**Resource Protection:** Recreation and resource protection can be mutually supportive activities. The C&O Canal Towpath is a prime example of the successful integration of these two objectives as it provides opportunities for active and passive recreation while serving to protect an invaluable riparian corridor along the Potomac River as well as many historic resources.

**Social Integration:** Recreational activities that take place on publicly available lands or facilities provide an outlet for people with similar interests to come together and socialize regardless of their social status. Long range park plans should contain suitable flexibility to respond to changing demographic changes and lifestyle preferences while not losing sight of long range established goals.

**Health and Wellness:** Access to places that people can recreate at affordably is a key method of promoting public health and wellness behaviors that lead to better outcomes for individuals and communities and reduce overall health care costs.

**Access:** Like other community facilities, the location of park facilities and recreation program sites should be carefully considered so that they are accessible to adjacent residential neighborhoods and to multiple modes of transportation.

**Flexibility:** Changing interests over time have been reflected in the amenities expected by park users and in the activities offered by recreation programs. To meet these rising expectations, parks must now provide for an increasing range of passive



and active uses, ranging from recreational trails to specialized athletic courts and field spaces. Recreational programming now encompasses classes for all ages and abilities, often including class topics or pursuits traditionally offered by the private market.

Washington County is fortunate to possess a large system of Federal, State, and Local parks. As detailed in the Parks and Recreation section of this Plan, 98% of Washington County's more than 33,000 acres of parkland is located on publicly owned lands. These lands offer numerous active and passive recreational opportunities while also serving to protect or conserve a variety of sensitive natural resource land throughout the County.

Publicly-owned Park lands in Washington County include the following:

- Four (4) Federally-owned park units administered primarily by the National Park Service: Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Antietam National Battlefield, Harper's Ferry National Historical Park, and the Chesapeake and Ohio National Historical Park.
- Thirteen (13) State-owned lands, including eight (8) State parks, four (4) Wildlife Management Areas and one (1) Natural Resources Management Area.
- Eighteen (18) County parks
- Thirty-Three (33) Municipally-owned parks

In addition to the public parklands which comprise the overwhelming majority of the County's parks and recreation system, private entities and quasi-public lands offer additional recreational opportunities. 2% of County parklands are provided on privately owned lands by various community organizations which allow some degree of public access to their facilities. Joint-use agreements between Washington County Government and Washington County Public Schools facilitate the shared use of several public school facilities, particularly for County recreational programming. Additional details about parks owned by each of these entities are provided in the Parks and Recreation Section of this Plan.

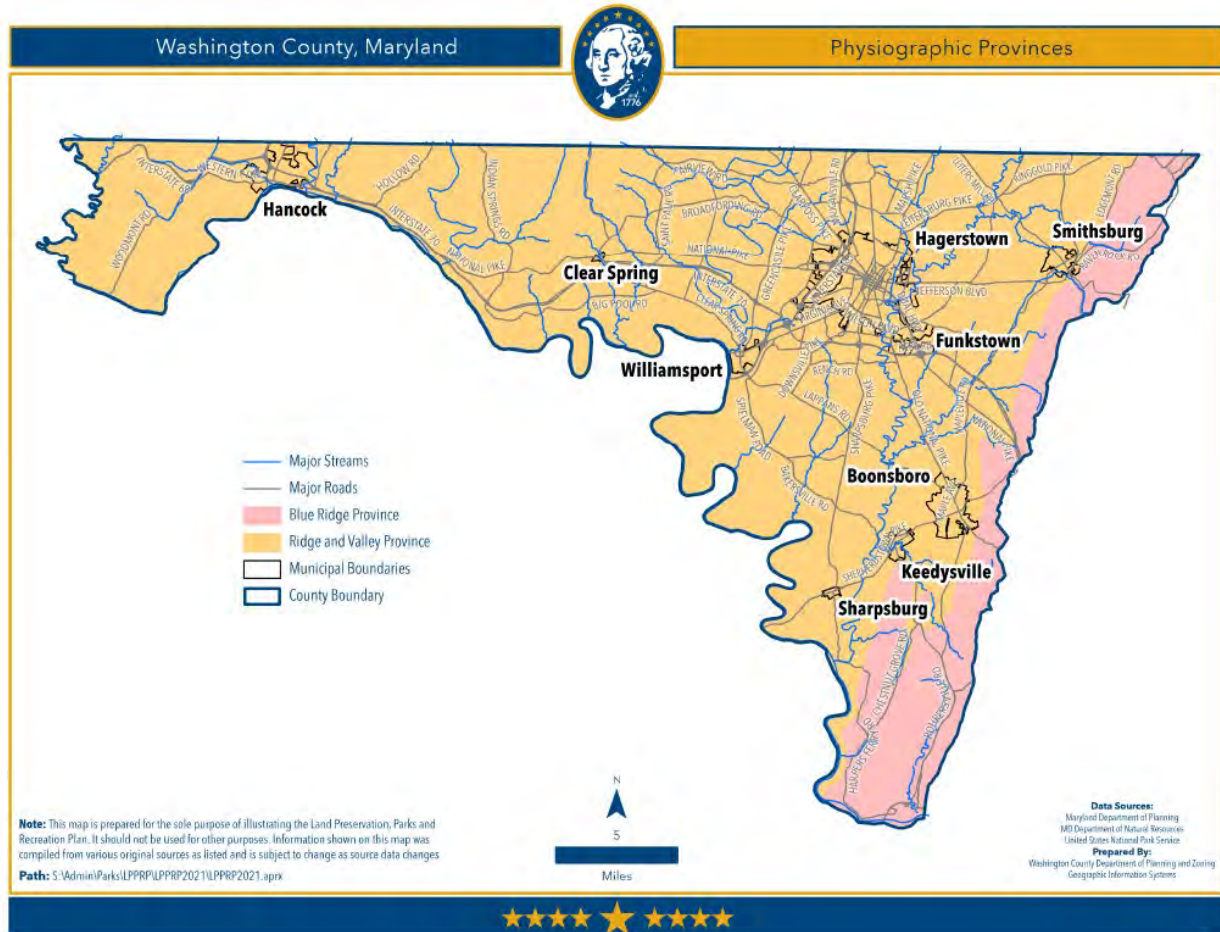
#### **A. General Geographic Information**

Washington County is one of four counties commonly described as "Western Maryland". It is bounded to the east by Frederick County; the north by Pennsylvania (Mason-Dixon Line); to the west by Allegany County, and the south by the Potomac River. There are nine (9) incorporated municipalities located within the County. Hagerstown, the County seat and largest municipality, is located approximately 70 miles northwest of Baltimore and Washington DC and 165 miles southeast of Pittsburgh.

The County contains 467 square miles (298,522 acres), of which approximately 455 square miles are land. The terrain consists of prominent ridges and broad valleys running in a northeast/southwest direction. More than 100 miles of shoreline along the Potomac River occur within the County. There are no natural lakes.

The Great Valley, also called the Great Appalachian Valley, is one of the major landform features of eastern North America. It could be characterized as a massive trough – a chain of valley lowlands – that is a central feature of the Appalachian Mountain system. The trough stretches approximately 1200 miles from Quebec to Alabama and has been an important north-south route of travel since prehistoric times. Washington County contains the Maryland part of the Great Valley, often referred to as the Hagerstown Valley, which connects to the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and West Virginia.





**Map 1: Physiographic Provinces**

As shown in the map above, the County is geologically diverse, including parts of two other physiographic provinces – the Blue Ridge and Ridge and Valley. South Mountain and Elk Ridge, extending north to south along the eastern boundary of the County, are the westernmost extent of the Blue Ridge province. The Hagerstown Valley, which contains more than half of the land area of the County, extends from the west base of South Mountain to Fairview Mountain west of Clear Spring. There, small ridges and valleys begin and run to the west as part of the Ridge and Valley physiographic province. Elevations throughout the County range from Quirack Mountain at 2,145 feet in the northeast corner of the County to 300 feet above sea level in the southern end of the Hagerstown Valley near the Potomac River.

### Geology and Soils

The surface rock strata and most of the subsurface rock in the County consist of limestone, shale and sandstone. The Hagerstown Valley is underlain mostly by relatively soluble limestone and shows evidence of the sinkholes and caverns associated with karst geology. As a result, the County has the largest number of known caves in Maryland and a substantial number of springs occurring where permeable and impermeable rock layers meet. The narrower valleys are underlain mostly by shale while the ridges are formed by resistant sandstone or quartzite.

The topography of the County varies greatly due to its physiographic location. The Hagerstown



Valley is primarily flat with gently rolling hills. Slopes are steepest along the eastern border of Washington County, in the areas between Licking Creek and Little Conococheague Creek, along the Little Tonoloway Creek and along Sideling Hill Creek. Nearly 30% of the County's total land area has slopes greater than 15% with an additional 8,000 acres on slopes above 30%. Slopes are also steep along most of the creek beds in the County due to years of erosion as the streams meandered.

The best quality soils for agriculture are primarily located in the Hagerstown Valley region of the County. Areas of high quality soils near Clear Spring and in the Southern part of the County east and south of Sharpsburg have also been targeted for protection through a variety of agricultural preservation easement programs.

### Forest Resources

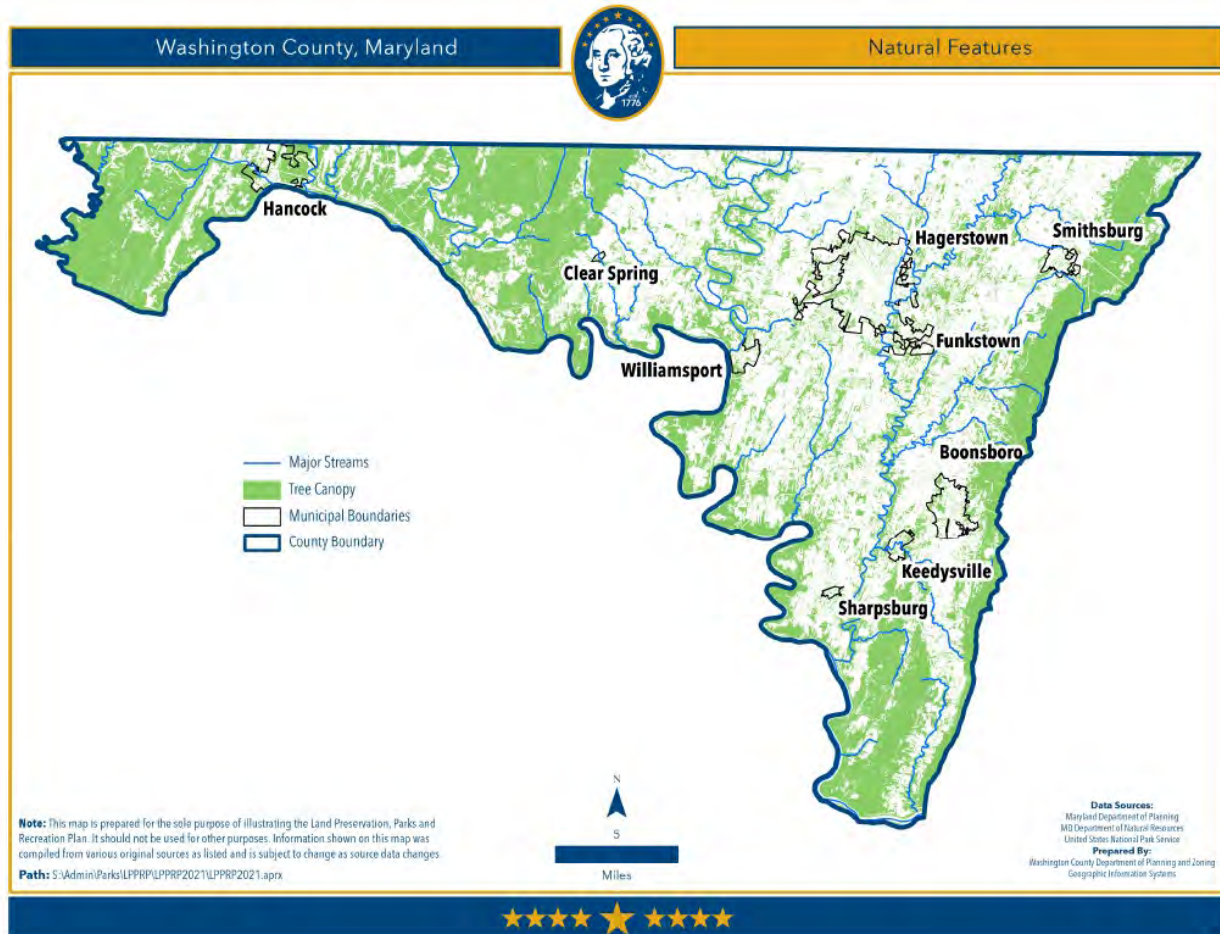
Before settlement and farming began, most of the County was covered with hardwood forest. Now, the significant remaining forested areas are along South Mountain and in the western portion of the County. Forests are primarily located on steep slopes including the Elk Ridge and Red Hill areas in the south end of the County, the ridges north and west of Clear Spring, and the ridges west of Hancock. Additional forested areas are in the Hagerstown Valley where the land is too rocky or steep for development or farming. Bottomland forests are found along the fertile floodplains of Conococheague and Antietam Creeks, and along the Potomac River.

Forested cover, shown in the map below, comprises 45.8% of the County or approximately 137,277 acres.<sup>1</sup> A great deal of this acreage is protected under State or Federal ownership. State owned forest land includes over 7,000 acres along South Mountain which contain several State parks and protect the Appalachian Trail corridor. Significant areas of State owned forest are also located in the western end of the County, including 6,500 acres in the Indian Springs area, 3,400 acres in the Woodmont Natural Resource Management Area and over 2,600 acres in the Sideling Hill Wildlife Management Area.<sup>2</sup> The City owned areas of the Edgemont Watershed on South Mountain preserve approximately 1,800 acres of woodlands for water supply, open space, and limited recreational uses. Approximately 5,300 acres are protected along the east bank of the Potomac River, within the federally owned and managed Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park.

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<sup>1</sup> Tree Canopy Calculated Internally Using Chesapeake Bay Model (2017)

<sup>2</sup> Fiscal Year 2020 Maryland Department of Natural Resources Lands Acreage Report



Map 2: Natural Features of Washington County, MD

According to a 2013 forest inventory conducted by the United States Forest Service in cooperation with the Maryland Forest Service and Maryland Department of Natural Resources, most of the forest stands in Washington County are associated with the Oak-Hickory forest community (79%). The remaining forest is classified as White/Red/Jack Pine (8%), Oak/Pine (6%), Other Hardwoods (6%), Elm/Ash/Cottonwood (1%).<sup>3</sup>

## B. General Population and Demographic Information

### Population

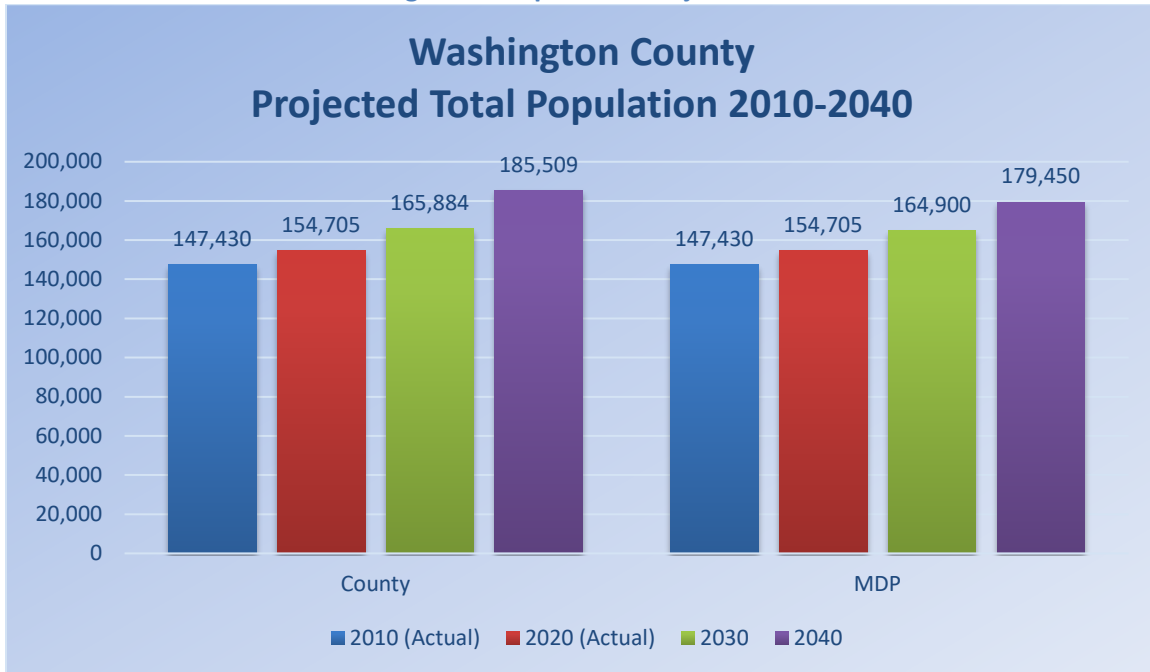
Population projections, which are an important tool in planning for public investment in parks, recreation and other protected lands, have been very difficult to evaluate in recent decades due to numerous factors and events affecting the economy and housing markets. Both the economy and housing market flourished during the end of the 1990's and into the beginning of the 2000's in Washington County, bringing in a much higher number of new citizens than previously predicted. The County's population grew 8.6% from 1990-2000, and 11.7% between 2000-2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>3</sup> Maryland Forest Composition. Retrieved from: <https://ccbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=42d2db8c52284d2b9fc57e073733a4bd#> on September 29, 2021.



Obscured by this overall trend of progressively increasing population growth in the previous two decades was the sudden decline in the housing market mid to late 2000’s, which had a tremendous impact both locally and nationally. The resulting recession significantly stemmed previous growth trends and likely was a strong contributor to an increase of only 7,275 people (or 4.9%) since 2010. Washington County’s current population presently stands at 154,705 people.<sup>4</sup> The current population increase is notably less than was previously predicted by the County and State prior to 2020 (both estimates exceeded 160,000 people by 2020). The effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic bring further uncertainty to forecasting future population growth based upon these continually shifting economic fortunes.

Figure 1: Population Projections



Caveats aside, projections from both the County and State assume a resumption of more steady population growth over the next few decades, as can be seen in the graph above. The Maryland Department of Planning’s (MDP) most recent population projections (December 2020) anticipate an increase of 32,020 people (or .72% annually) by 2040. The County Planning Department has also developed population projections through 2040. County projections indicate an increase in population of approximately 38,079 people (or .86% annually) through 2040.

The County’s updated projections deviate slightly from MDPs, particularly after 2030. Accounting for current local trends in natality and mortality rates, net migration, group quarters, and new housing construction, the County utilizes a 0.71% per year growth factor from 2020-2030, which is below its traditional annual rate of growth of 1.15%. The traditional growth rate of 1.15% per year is then used between 2030-2040, when the effects of recent volatility caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic and other economic trends begins to diminish in effect. MDP, on the other hand, projects an annual growth rate of .88% after 2030, ultimately resulting in a project difference of 6,059 individuals by 2040.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 Decennial Census.



## Households

The standard economic definition of a household is the number of persons living together in one housing unit. More simply, a household is equivalent to any occupied housing unit. Households are broken down into family (where residents are related to primary householder through birth, marriage or adoption) and non-family (where residents are unrelated). This statistic is important in understanding the demand for types of living quarters and estimating population fluctuations based on new unit development. From the perspective of providing parks and open space, household types also offer insight into, among other things, the types of amenities that may be desired at parks, or the potential demand for recreational programming serving the needs of various user groups.

According to the 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Washington County has approximately 56,367 households of which 37,939, or 67.3%, are family households. Family households made up 67.4% of total households in the Census data used in the County’s 2017 LPPRP (from 2015 ACS estimates), so there has not been a statistically significant increase in non-family households in the last four years. A breakdown of household types in 2019 is shown below.

**Table 1: Household Characteristics (2020)**

Washington County - Households and Families (2020)				
Household Type	Children Under 18?		Total	% of Total Households
	Yes	No		
<b>Family Households</b>				
Married Couple Family	9,653	17,954	27,607	49.0%
Male Householder (No Spouse)	2,098	1,378	3,476	6.2%
Female Householder (No Spouse)	3,975	2,881	6,856	12.2%
Subtotal	15,726	22,213	37,939	67.3%
<b>Non-Family Households</b>			18,428	32.7%
<b>Totals</b>			56,367	100.0%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate (S1101)

## Socio-Economic Characteristics

Washington County’s population aged 16 years or greater is projected to become predominantly female by 2030, as seen in Table 2 below. This trend mirrors that of the State as a whole, where the majority of this age group is already female now and will likely continue to be mostly female through 2040.

**Table 2: Gender Projections (2010-2040) - Age 16+**

	2010	2020	2030	2040
<b>Washington County</b>				
Male	50.7%	50.2%	49.4%	49.0%
Female	49.3%	49.8%	50.6%	51.0%
<b>Maryland</b>				
Male – State	47.7%	47.6%	47.4%	48.4%
Female State	52.3%	52.4%	52.6%	52.7%





Source: Maryland Department of Planning - Population 16 Years and Over (2018)

Washington County is projected to remain populated by a significantly Non-Hispanic White population through 2040, unlike Maryland as a whole which appears to be transitioning towards a more uniformly mixed populace. The share of Non-Hispanic White individuals is projected to drop by 14.3% between 2010 and 2040 in Washington County, however. The largest increase in the County belongs to the Non-Hispanic Black category, which is projected to increase by 7.2% by 2040.

**Table 3: Race Projections (2010-2040) – Washington County v. Maryland**

	2010	2020	2030	2040
<b>Washington County</b>				
Non-Hispanic White	85.8%	80.1%	74.8%	71.5%
Non-Hispanic Black	6.6%	9.3%	12.1%	13.8%
Non-Hispanic Other	4.1%	5.3%	6.4%	7.2%
Hispanic	3.5%	5.4%	6.7%	7.5%
<b>Maryland</b>				
Non-Hispanic White	54.8%	49.8%	45.3%	41.9%
Non-Hispanic Black	28.8%	29.8%	31.4%	32.9%
Non-Hispanic Other	8.2%	9.8%	11.3%	12.3%
Hispanic	8.2%	10.6%	12.0%	12.9%

Source: Maryland Department of Planning - Household Population Projections for Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, Non-Hispanic Other and Hispanic by Age and Gender (2020)

### Age Cohorts

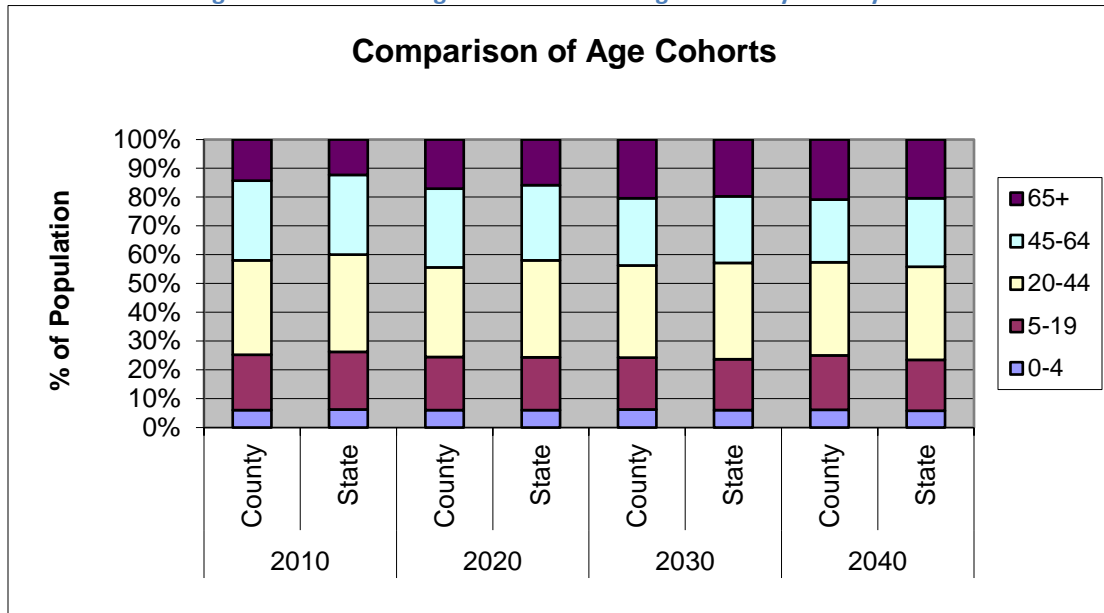
Figure 2, below, shows age cohort projections between 2010 and 2040 which compare Washington County with the State of Maryland using data taken from the Maryland Department of Planning. Most age groupings found in Census data used by MDP have been aggregated together, except for the 0-4 age group.

The most significant trend that can be found in these projections, both at the County and State level, is the steady movement of the population from both the 20-44 and 45-64 age groups into the 65+ age group. Between 2010 and 2040, the 65+ age group is projected to increase by 7.2% in Washington County and by 8.8% in Maryland overall. This indicates that many people will be aging out of the workforce and entering retirement. From the perspective of this plan, that translates into an increased need for recreation programs and amenities in parks and open spaces that meet the needs of seniors.





Figure 2: 2010-2040 Age Cohorts - Washington County v. Maryland



Source: Maryland Department of Planning - Household Population Projections for Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, Non-Hispanic Other and Hispanic by Age and Gender (2020)

### Household Income Characteristics

Table 4, below, displays the median household income in Washington County in comparison to Maryland as a whole. Household incomes are particularly useful when determining appropriate fees and charges for recreation programs or entrance to public lands. The largest median income grouping in Washington County falls within the \$50,000-\$74,999 at 17.5%, which would generally constitute a “middle-class” standard for most families based upon the local cost of living. Maryland as a whole, sees its largest median income grouping at \$100,000-\$149,999 which, when accounting for the more developed portions of the State to the east, also is likely middle-class standard in most places.

Table 2: Median Household Income - Washington County v. Maryland

Household Income Characteristics		
Income Range	Washington County	Maryland
Less than \$10,000	5.4%	4.6%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	4.1%	2.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	9.0%	5.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	8.9%	6.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,000	13.0%	9.3%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	16.6%	15.2%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.0%	13.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	15.7%	19.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	7.8%	10.8%
\$200,000 or more	5.5%	13.4%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$63,510</b>	<b>\$87,063</b>

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate (S1901)



## **II. PARKS AND RECREATION**

### **A. Overview of the Parks and Recreation System in Washington County**

Parks and recreation facilities located throughout Washington County are designed to meet the needs and interests of County residents and visitors alike. Federal, State, and Local parks, along with those parks provided by private entities, offer opportunities throughout the County for active and passive recreational activities. Many of these same facilities also accomplish supporting objectives such as natural resource protection or historic preservation.

Public parks, recreational amenities and their associated programs provide myriad benefits to users. As was evident in the dramatic increase in visitation to nearly all public lands around the country during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, access to public green space is vital to community quality of life and personal well-being. Frequent exposure to nature offered significant positive effects during this period when the availability of indoor recreational spaces was frequently impacted. Beyond passive uses of these lands, parks also provide space for active alternatives to the jogger, walker, biker, who has developed a fitness regimen on their own, and prefers this setting to developed areas. For some, signing up for recreation programs helps provide the structure and motivation to engage in regular physical activity, or socialize with like-minded individuals.

Most of the parklands under the ownership and direction of Federal and State governments provide more passive type recreational opportunities, such as hiking/walking/biking trails, picnic areas, playgrounds, camping areas, and educational facilities such as nature centers or museums. These areas also support environmental conservation and natural resource protection goals by maintaining areas in a mostly primitive state with low to moderate impacts from human usage.

Local and municipal parks are primarily focused on more active forms of recreation such as play fields, hard court sports, playgrounds, swimming pools, and indoor recreation centers. To a lesser extent, these parks may also serve conservation and educational needs in local communities.

The Washington County Recreation Department provides individuals in Washington County the opportunity to enjoy affordable recreation and fitness classes with programs for both youth and adults which support a healthy lifestyle. The department offers more than 30 individual or seasonal programs including the popular Jim and Fay Powers Music Series, heritage based educational programs, a wide range of fitness based programs, and many organized leagues for all ages. Most are offered in public parks and in county school facilities.

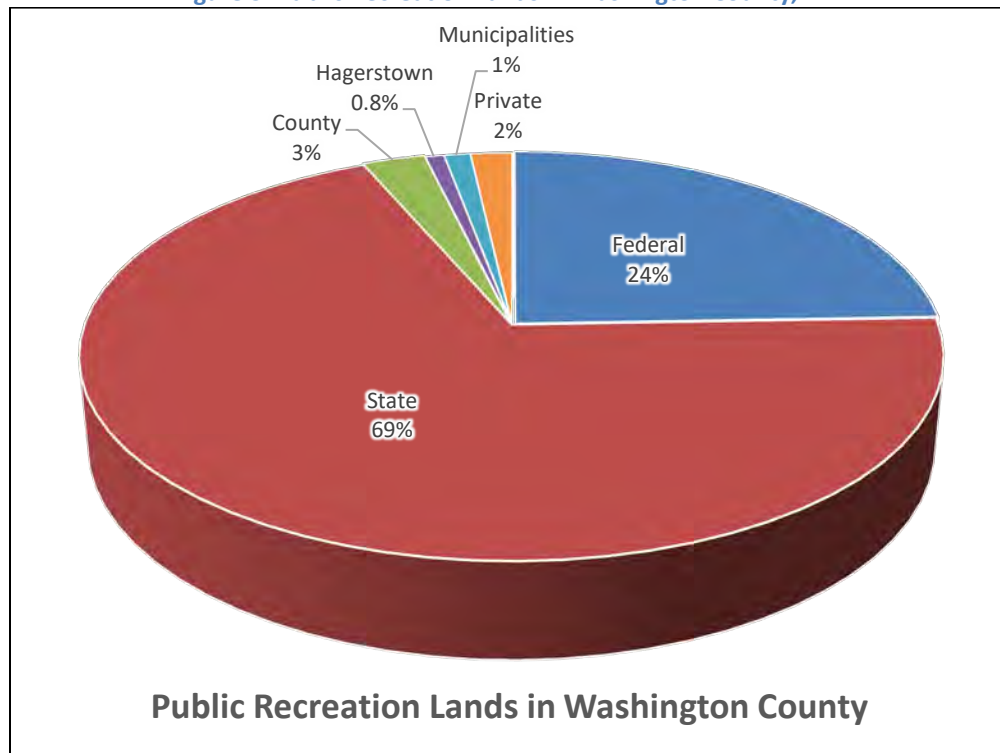
Washington County owns and maintains 18 parks or recreational facilities. Maintenance is planned and performed by the Parks and Facilities Department, which is a section of the Division of Public Works. As outlined in the parks inventory in Appendix B of this document, most of the County parks contain picnic and playground areas. Many of the parks also include active field/court based recreation opportunities. The County is also unique in that it owns and operates an award winning 18-hole golf course, Black Rock Golf Course.

While the County has many opportunities for active field sport activities, there are some gaps in local natural resource based recreation opportunities. The County continues to work with private property owners to locate public access to local waterways, and therefore, provide more opportunities for activities such as fishing and kayaking.



In total, Washington County has a total of approximately 33,248 acres<sup>5</sup> of public parklands and natural resources lands. As shown in the chart below, most of parkland and natural resource lands are located in either Federal or State public lands of various types. The 40+ miles of the Appalachian Trail that run through Washington County are accounted for in the Maryland State Park lands that the trail passes through.

Figure 3: Public Recreation Lands in Washington County, MD



### Parkland Classifications

Park and open space area include a variety of recreation areas and facilities to meet the various recreational needs of residents and visitors. Parks and open spaces can also be established to preserve, conserve, and manage natural resources and habitats. To define the various types of lands used for recreation or resource management related purposes that appear on the County's inventory, the following classifications are offered below:

#### i. Recreation v. Resource Lands

**Recreation Land:** Land and/or related water areas that support recreation as a primary use. This land may also contain cultural, agricultural, or other resources related or incidental to its recreational purpose. There are two sub-categories of recreational land:

- a. **Non-Resource Based Recreational Land:** Land on which the primary recreational activities do not depend on the presence of natural resources. This land supports activities that can occur in the absence of intact natural resources, and are generally

<sup>5</sup> Acreage total does not include School Facilities included in Parkland Inventory



more dependent on-site improvements than on natural resources (i.e. - public swimming pools, basketball courts, and baseball fields).

- b. **Natural Resource Based Recreational Land:** Land on which the primary recreation activities depend on the presence of natural resources. Activities generally do not occur without the presence of natural resources (i.e. - public beaches, backpacking, camping, and hiking).

**Resource Land:** Land and/or related water areas for which natural resource protection, conservation, or management is of primary importance. This land may support agricultural, recreational, economic, or other uses to the extent that they do not conflict with protection or preservation of the natural resource.

To further refine the classification of lands in the parks system in terms of amenities, size, and the geographic service area, recreation and resource lands are defined in the table below and in the definitions that follow.

**Table 4: Park Classifications**

Park Type	Acreage Range	Service Area
<b>Neighborhood</b>	1 to 10 acres	1/2 mile
<b>Community</b>	30 to 100 acres	2+ miles
<b>Regional</b>	100+ acres	10+ miles
<b>Special Use</b>	1 to 50 acres	Countywide
<b>State &amp; Federal Resource Lands</b>	1,000+ acres	Countywide

**Neighborhood Park:** The primary function is to serve as the recreational and social focus of a neighborhood. They are developed for both active and passive activities, accommodating a wide variety of age groups. Sites are generally small, in the two to five-acre range, and are usually within one half mile or less of potential users.

**Community Park:** The purpose is larger and broader than neighborhood parks. Their focus is on meeting the recreational needs of several neighborhoods or larger sections of the community as well as preserving unique landscapes, open spaces, and natural resources. Sites can range in size from ten to fifty acres depending on rural or urban settings and the number of potential users. These parks are generally intensely developed to provide both passive and active recreational opportunities to potential users within two to three miles.

**County/Regional Park:** Like the community park, the focus is on recreation as well as preserving natural landscapes, open spaces, and natural resources. Sites are generally fifty acres or more and provide both active and passive recreational opportunities to potential users throughout the County and/or region.

**School Recreational Land:** These are sites owned and maintained by the Board of Education and serve to provide for the school's recreational needs as well as limited community needs. The school recreational land consists of formal athletic fields and playground equipment with the primary focus on scholastic sports and in school recreational activities. An agreement between the Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Education allows additional funds to be provided to build an expanded gym, storage areas, recreation rooms and offices to support Recreation Centers which are open to the public when school is not in session. These Centers are managed by the County's Department of Parks and Recreation.



**Special Use Park:** Areas that are generally oriented toward a single purpose use such as public golf courses, including protection of unique features such as historic or cultural sites, stream access, wetland areas, and habitat management areas.

**State Park:** Areas with natural resources or geographic, topographic, or physiographic characteristics that is suitable for recreational development and use. These areas are managed with the primary objective of providing outdoor recreational opportunities for the public in a natural setting.

**State Wildlife Management Area** – Areas with the primary objective of protecting, propagating, and managing wildlife populations. They may provide recreational opportunities for sportsmen and other wildlife enthusiasts, or may be an undisturbed refuge for wildlife.

**State Natural Resource Management Area** – Areas where multiple-use management practices are employed for the maximum use of the natural resources of the area. These areas are not committed to specific uses until they have been studied and management plans are developed. A variety of interim uses may be allowed, including recreational, that do not conflict with the protection or management of the area's natural resources.

**Federal Park:** Areas managed primarily for the preservation of natural or cultural resources that are of national significance. The federal park lands occurring in Washington County are managed by the National Park Service (NPS) under various designations. The NPS is also tasked with making these lands accessible for public use and enjoyment.

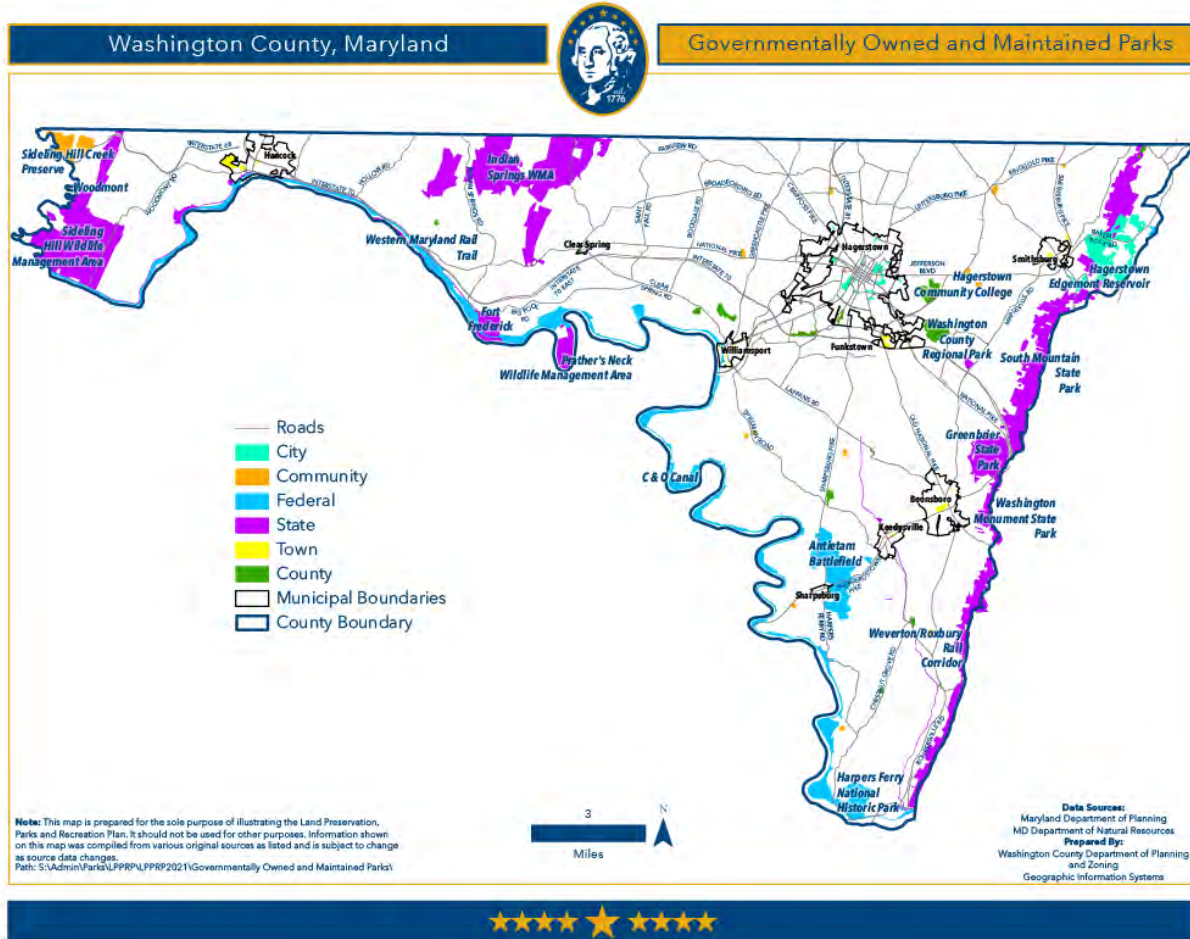
Most non-resource based recreational land is contained within County and municipal parks. While the municipalities focus on neighborhood scale parks, the County focuses more on community and regional park resources. As noted above, State and Federal Parks occurring in Washington County serve a dual purpose of providing opportunities for both recreation and natural resource protection. The sum total of all these lands provides a diverse network of parks and recreation facilities for visitors to enjoy.

In addition to governmentally owned park facilities, there are several community and Ruritan parks that are privately owned but are also open to the public in varying degrees. While not technically included within the proximity analysis due to their privately-owned nature, it is still important to include as a resource.

## **B. Inventory of Existing Public Parks and Recreation Facilities**

### **i. Public Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Map 3, seen below, displays the system of public park lands defined in the previous section. Most acreage is contained within the State and Federal Park units found in Washington County. Geographically, these lands are concentrated mostly around the County's southern and eastern perimeter where major land and water features lend themselves to landscape level preservation efforts. County and municipal parks, which are smaller in size but more numerous than State and Federal Parks, are typically concentrated within, or on the periphery of, the jurisdictional limits of existing communities and planned growth areas. The inventory of all park lands and a full-size map are contained in the appendix.



Map 3: Governmentally Owned and Maintained Parks in Washington County, MD

ii. Federal Parks



Photo 1: C&O Canal Towpath

There are four Federal park units located within Washington County: the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Antietam National Battlefield, Harper’s Ferry National Historical Park, and the Chesapeake and Ohio National Historical Park. The primary intent of each of these parks is to protect historical aspects of the area through education and historical interpretation programs. They also make some limited recreational opportunities available such as biking, hiking, camping, horseback riding, and walking/jogging trails.





iii. [State Parks](#)



**Photo 1: Albert Powell State Fish Hatchery**

The State of Maryland also owns and maintains lands in Washington County that includes eight (8) State parks, four (4) Wildlife Management Areas and one (1) Natural Resources Management Area. There is a wide variety of passive and active recreational opportunities in these areas including biking, hiking, camping, horseback riding, walking/jogging, swimming, and playgrounds. The State parks include Fort Frederick, Gathland, Greenbrier, South Mountain (includes Appalachian Trail), South Mountain Battlefield, Washington Monument, and the Western Maryland Rail Trail. Wildlife Management Areas include Indian Springs, Islands of the Potomac, Prather’s Neck, and Sideling Hill.

Woodmont Natural Resource Management Area is managed for resource conservation, public access to recreation and preservation of a historic lodge.

iv. [County and Municipal Parks](#)



**Photo 3: Pen Mar Park**

At a County-level, there are eighteen (18) parks that are owned and maintained through the County Department of Parks and Facilities with the Division of Public Works. They include the Agricultural Education Center, Black Rock Golf Course, Camp Harding, Chestnut Grove, Clear Spring, Devil’s Backbone, Doub’s Woods, Kemps Mill, Marty Snook, Mt. Briar Wetland Preserve, Pen Mar, Pinesburg Softball Complex, Piper Lane, Pleasant Valley, Rose’s Mill, Regional, Wilson Bridge, and Woodland Way. These areas offer more active recreational opportunities such as sports fields (soccer, baseball, football, softball, etc.), playgrounds, golf courses, courts (basketball, tennis, volleyball, etc.).



**Photo 4: City Park, Hagerstown**

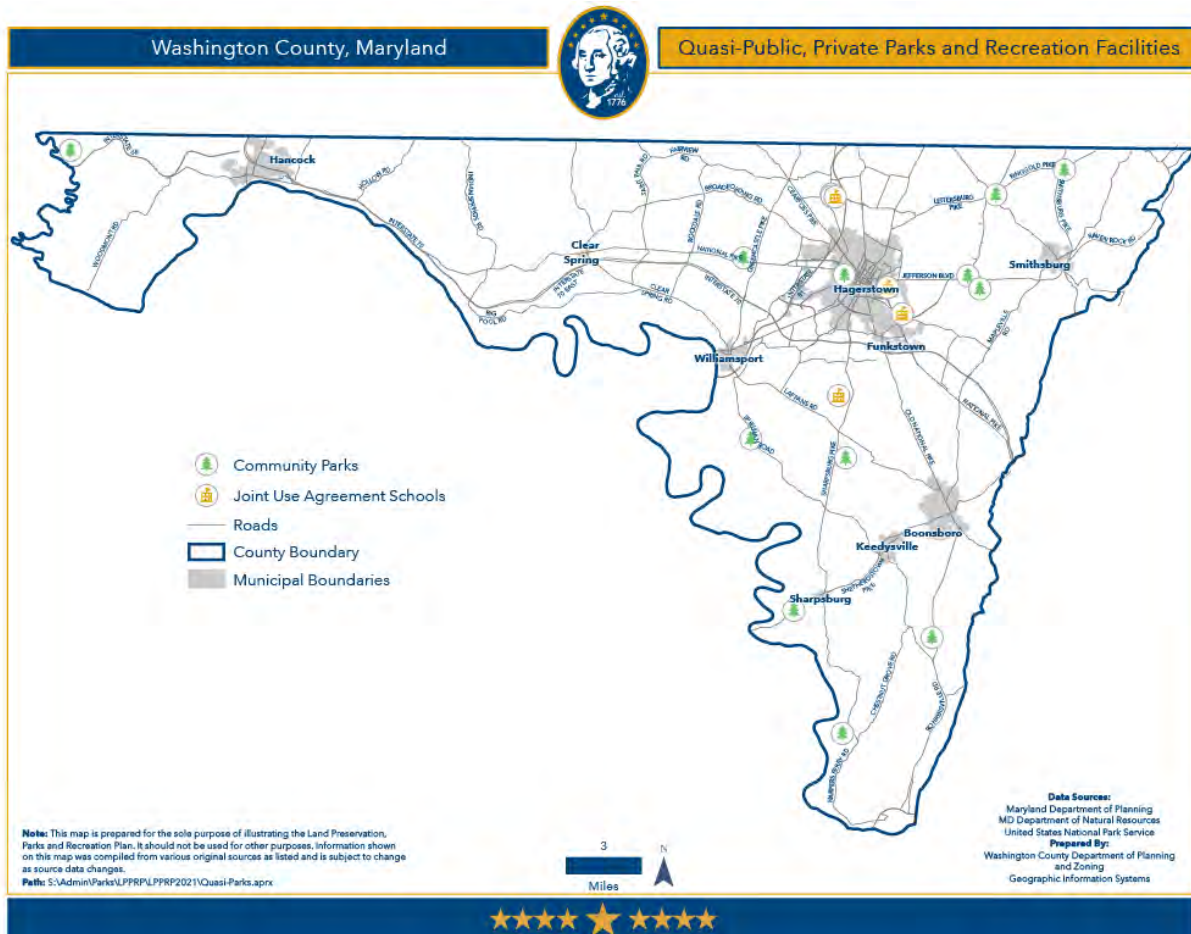
Finally, there are nine (9) incorporated municipalities within the County that also provide parks and recreational opportunities to residents within their boundaries and within the County. Those municipalities include the City of Hagerstown (22 parks) and the Towns of Boonsboro (1 park), Clear Spring (no municipal parks, but 1 County park); Funkstown (1 park), Hancock (3 parks), Keedysville (1 park), Sharpsburg (1 park), Smithsburg (2 parks), and Williamsport (2 parks). These areas also serve a similar purpose to those of the County which provide active recreation areas and some passive recreation areas.

v. [Quasi-Public and Private Parks and Recreation Facilities](#)

Quasi-public and/or privately owned recreational facilities or park lands that are open or available for regular public use are shown on Map 4 below. These include privately owned community and Ruritan parks, as well as public school facilities that have joint-use agreements between the County and the local Board of Education. At the public school sites, various indoor facilities such as gymnasiums are being used by the County Recreation Department to facilitate local recreation programs. The facilities shown on this



map (and which are also included in the County’s Park Inventory) help to fill needs in parts of the County which are called out on the Park Equity and Park Proximity Analyses as areas which may be candidates for new park development later on in the LPPRP.



Map 4: Quasi-Public and Private Parks and Recreation Facilities

## I. Measuring User Demand

### i. Public Engagement and Outreach

Public engagement for the County’s 2022 LPPRP update was primarily conducted through a two-part online survey that was open to the public for approximately two months in the summer of 2021. The survey was advertised to the public by the County’s Public Relations Department through various media outlets during this period, yielding 521 responses from 27 different zip codes during the 8-9 week period.

The two parts of the survey were comprised of a questionnaire and an interactive mapping tool. The questionnaire focused on measuring user proximity and access to, as well as usage of, County parks and facilities plus participation in local recreation programs. The second part of the survey offered a more open-ended format for respondent feedback on parks, programs and facilities. Respondents were able to identify specific locations throughout the County where they wished to see new parks, amenities or facilities, or had specific comments on existing facilities, by dropping a pin on a map and inputting their comments into the pop-up dialogue box that appeared. Fifty-two additional comments were received



on the mapped portion of the survey. The overall idea of each survey piece was to capture both quantitative and qualitative responses from the public on both existing parks and recreation resources as well as those they'd like to see in the future.

**2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan Survey**

**Park Usage and Recreation Program Usage**

**How close do you live to a park?**

Less than 1 mile     1-3 miles     3-5 miles

5-10 miles     More than 10 miles

**How frequently do you visit a park?**

Daily     Weekly     Monthly     Rarely

**Which County parks and/or recreation facilities do you use?**  
Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Education Center	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCC at HCC	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Rock Golf Course
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Harding Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Chestnut Grove Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear Spring Park
<input type="checkbox"/> Devil's Backbone Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Doub's Woods Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruth Ann Monroe Primary

**Image 1: 2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Survey Questionnaire Snapshot**

The questionnaire portion of the survey (see snapshot above) consisted of 15 primary questions aimed at measuring visitor use and demand of parks and recreation programs and facilities. Five additional questions gathered demographic data on respondents for those willing to provide that information. The entirety of both parts of the survey can be found in the Appendix. Some of the major conclusions that could be drawn from the survey include:

- 72% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with existing County parks, programs, facilities and services
- 61% live within 3 miles or less from a park





- 89% access parks or recreation facilities by personal automobile
- 44% visit a park at least once per week or more
- 40% of households surveyed had a member who participated in recreation programs
- Marty Snook Park, Devil’s Backbone Park and the Agricultural Education Center were the most frequently visited County Parks
- Trails and paths for walking, running, bicycling and other activities were both the most frequently used amenity at County parks and the most requested new amenity to be added
- 48% of respondents favored “Creating New Amenities or Programs at Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities” when asked to rank their priorities for allocating funding
- “Maintain Existing Facilities and Programs at Current Standards” and “Expand Parks System So That New Facilities Can Be Offered to Match Population Growth” were the other choices”

In the mapped portion of the survey (see image below), respondents were asked to categorize their location specific comments according to choices such as “Parks I Visit,” “Water Access I Use,” “New Facilities or Park Amenities,” “Safety Concerns” before dropping a pin on the map. A pop-up dialogue box then appeared to allow for commenter elaboration under the chosen category. The responses gained from this portion of the survey revealed many useful insights for parks planning. The most frequently cited comments among multiple categories were visitor usage of existing trails and paths in parks for various recreation related purposes, and their desire to see more trails and paths created in many different locations around the County.

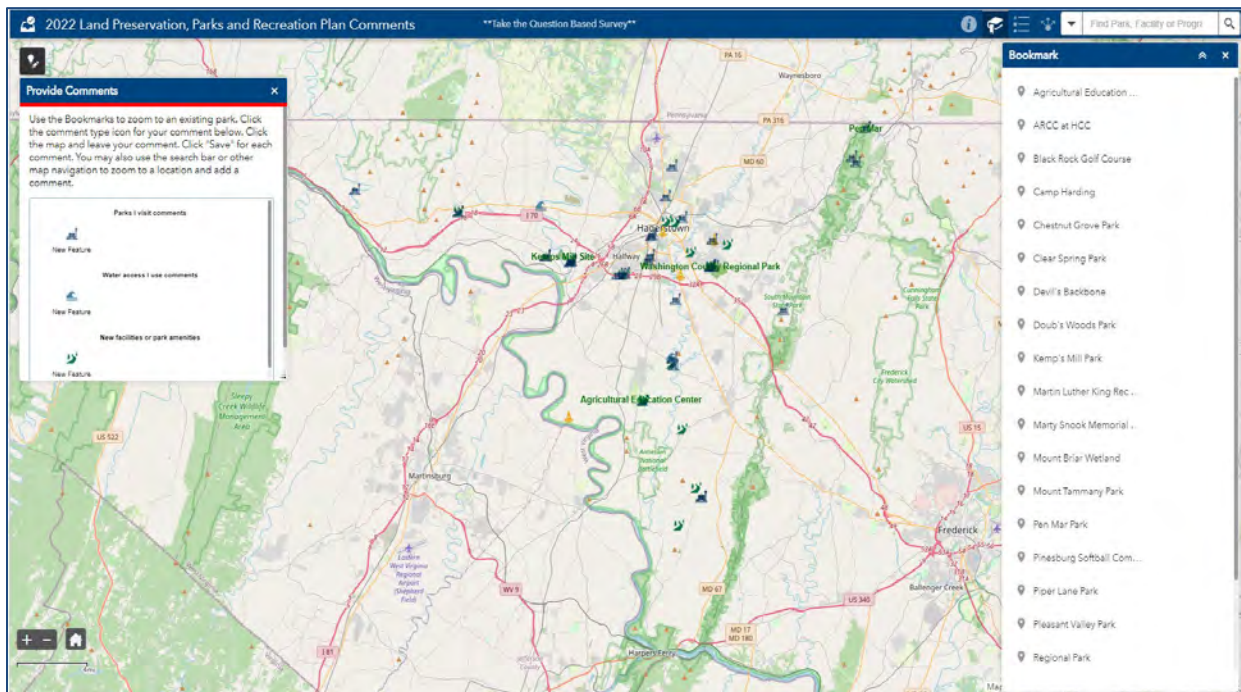


Image 2: 2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Survey Map Snapshot

These responses help to illustrate that although the County is very fortunate to already have an extensive network of trails and paths to serve recreational needs, particularly on Federal and State landholdings, many of these trails are located somewhat distant to the County’s population centers. By and large this is due simply to the County’s topography which has naturally located long distance trails such as the C&O Canal Towpath, Appalachian Trail, or Western Maryland Rail Trail along its mountainous eastern and southern perimeter bordering the Potomac River. Commenter responses therefore indicate



a desire to see additional trails or paths created within new or existing County or municipal parks closer to where people live and work. Plans are already in development to address these concerns throughout incremental improvements at various County and municipal parks using Project Open Space funds and other sources. In the most significant example, the County is pursuing the creation of an approximately 3 mile trail system within its designated Urban Growth Area at Regional Park on lands immediately south of Black Rock Golf Course and has already received grant funding to design and construct the project.

In addition to using the two-part survey to gauge local priorities for future parks and recreation development, the County also regularly engages with local municipalities and other stakeholder groups to identify their specific needs as well. The most formalized example of this engagement process occurs in the development of the budget allocating Program Open Space (POS) funds awarded to counties by the State. Local municipalities, as well as governing bodies for higher education (Washington County Public Schools, Hagerstown Community College), are given the opportunity to present requests for POS funds to support capital parks and recreation projects occurring within their jurisdiction. These requests are fielded by the County's Director of Public Works and formally presented before the County's Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. This Board meets monthly to provide for the development and operation of recreational opportunities for Washington County residents. Funding is then distributed to recipients based upon the merits of their requests, past funding awards, and the capital planning needs of the County itself.

The POS award process has proven to be the most effective tool by which municipal needs can be identified and translated into concrete projects within the constraints of available funding. The formalized nature of this fiscally constrained process requires these entities to prioritize their needs for parks and recreation facilities instead of simply creating a wish list of projects that may not be funded or implemented according to an impactful timeline. Key decision makers, who are in tune with the needs of their community or organization, are integrally involved in the development of these POS requests to the County and often present them before the Board. Their presence provides assurance that project requests have been vetted by multiple entities before funding is allocated to a given project.

In some instances, in recent years, the County has also provided direct financial assistance to local municipalities to acquire lands that will be developed into community parks. This arrangement has occurred with two properties in Funkstown. In one instance, the Town was looking to acquire a large parcel of land in the immediate vicinity of its existing Community Park. In the other, it sought to convert lands located in a floodplain along Antietam Creek that are currently being used for residential purposes to park land that would provide additional access to the waterway. The acquisition of these properties for the purposes of park development may not have occurred without the County's involvement due to the significant upfront costs associated with the purchase of the land.

Typical public engagement and outreach methods used in development of past plans included public input meetings at several locations around the County. These meetings were proven to be ineffective and inefficient. While a few members of the public have had valuable comments regarding the status of our parks and recreation facilities, meetings would typically be poorly attended and would devolve into tangents upon specific negative experiences that proved to have no real solution or impact on the Plan.

Therefore, the County felt that the outreach which occurs with municipalities for the distribution of POS funding in combination with the publicly available online survey reasonably captured local needs and priorities for parks and recreation projects. The public also has multiple opportunities to comment



on the LPPRP itself when the document is presented before the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners before it is formally adopted.

Stakeholder meetings conducted during the outreach for the 2017 LPPRP also yielded a number of useful comments from various groups and individuals that remain relevant in developing the current Plan. Participants were first asked what the County has, and has not, done well with parks and recreation facilities. Responses included:

- The County has done well at addressing park safety, the maintenance of equipment and surfaces and made a good use of limited resources
- Facility scheduling could be improved due to the number of organized leagues already contracted to use various public recreation facilities (particularly softball and baseball fields)
- Some older sites do not fit the current needs or design guidelines for some facilities, (such as playground areas)
- The physical arrangement of some of the parks can limit user's enjoyment of the areas

Lastly, when asked what the County can do to improve parks and recreation facilities within the community, participants offered the following suggestions:

- ◆ Provide turf fields with lighting. These would require less maintenance even though initial costs would be higher. Turf fields also held the potential to stimulate more use of County facilities and generate more income for the County, perhaps attracting users from other areas, and reducing the need for citizens, teams and clubs to leave the community to access superior facilities in other locations.
- ◆ Develop more facilities in the east, north, Williamsport and Clear Springs areas.
- ◆ Obtain State and Federal money to promote trails/bike trails and improve inter-trail connections.
- ◆ Explore the potential for water trails along the creeks and waterways within the County, specifically the Antietam and Conococheague Creeks.
- ◆ Coordinate with Maryland State Parks to provide wider access roads and additional parking for walking trails.
- ◆ Convert abandoned railroad corridors to trails.
- ◆ Prioritize the use of Program Open Space funds and pursue other funding sources.
- ◆ Strive to improve the maintenance/replacement budget and schedule.
- ◆ Base long-term plans for increased park land and facilities on projected population increases.
- ◆ Provide more parking.
- ◆ Investigate the airport as a location for recreational facilities.
- ◆ Conduct a socio-economics analysis of areas around existing parks so that facilities can be developed to match neighborhood needs.
- ◆ Offer more aquatic facilities.

## ii. [Usage, Demands, and Participation Rates](#)

### [Recreation Programs and Park Facilities](#)

The COVID-19 Pandemic presented unprecedented challenges in the provision of recreation programs throughout the County. The fundamental in-person nature of many programs became impossible to carry out due to restrictions on group gatherings at many program sites, particularly indoors.





This necessitated creativity on the part of County and municipal recreation program providers to find alternative methods for program delivery. Virtual activities, moving program sites outdoors or to brand new locations, reduced class capacities, social distancing, mask wearing and many more public health measures were accommodated by staff in service of continuing to provide opportunities for community members to engage in recreation and fitness activities.

The following tables show attendance figures for County youth and adult recreation programs and special events, plus recreation center rentals for 2019 and 2020. Despite the immense efforts described above, program attendance was certainly affected greatly by the Pandemic. For this reason, County program attendance figures are presented for 2019 and 2020 to provide a point of comparison on program participation in a more normal year (2019) versus the most recently completed full year of programming (2020). As can be seen in Table 7, 2020 youth program attendance was half of what it was in 2019 while adult program attendance was reduced by 1/3 as a result of the Pandemic. Most special events were canceled in 2020.

**Tables 3 & 8: County Recreation Program Participation**

<b>Adult and Youth Recreation Programs Attendance</b>				
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>2019</b>		<b>2020</b>	
<u><b>Youth Programs</b></u>	<u><b>Participants</b></u>	<u><b>Sessions</b></u>	<u><b>Participants</b></u>	<u><b>Sessions</b></u>
Summer Camps	1894	44	532	49
Youth Dance	204	26	154	24
Youth Sports	1402	23	980	18
Swim Lessons	177	36	151	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>3677</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>1817</b>	<b>142</b>
<u><b>Adult Programs</b></u>	<u><b>Participants</b></u>	<u><b>Sessions</b></u>	<u><b>Participants</b></u>	<u><b>Sessions</b></u>
Adult Sports and Fitness	1168	53	783	44

<b>Special Events Attendance</b>						
	<b>2019</b>			<b>2020</b>		
	<u><b>Youth</b></u>	<u><b>Adult</b></u>	<u><b>Total</b></u>	<u><b>Youth</b></u>	<u><b>Adult</b></u>	<u><b>Total</b></u>
Princess Party	270	242	512	0	0	0
Park at Dark	115	103	218	0	0	0
Superhero Party	250	220	470	0	0	0
St. Patrick's Day Run Fest	95	530	625	0	0	0
High Rock Mountain	0	0	0	10	56	66



Running Challenge						
<b>Total</b>	730	1095	1825	10	56	66

Usage statistics for County park facilities in 2021 are provided in the tables below. In keeping with the pattern previously described, rentals for County school and community recreation centers were reduced by 2/3 in 2020 due to the Pandemic limiting many indoor activities. Rentals of County park facilities showed a strong recovery in 2021, as nearly 175,000 people utilized various outdoor facilities through a variety of public and private events.

**Tables 9 & 10: County Park Facilities Rentals and Usage**

<b>School and Community Recreation Center Reservations</b>		
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Birthday Rentals	242	69
Outside Rental Groups	34	20
Sports & Recreation Programs	61	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>113</b>

<b>Facility Rentals and Usage (2021)</b>		
	<b>Reservations</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Park Pavilions	625	27,500*
Ag Center	87 events	89,850*
Ball Fields (Tournaments and Leagues)		16,920
Marty Snook Park Pool		11,170
Black Rock Golf Course (Rounds)		29,316
<b>Total</b>		<b>174,756</b>
<b>* Approximate Totals</b>		

While continuing to adapt to fluid public health restrictions, the County offered many new programs for the first time in 2021 to meet the changing recreational interests of the public. Offerings include those for youth (basketball and soccer clinics, roller skating, child movement classes, archery, paint nights) and adults (HIIT fitness, pickleball, disc golf, women’s self-defense).



The County has continued to collaborate with the City of Hagerstown and the Commission on Aging to provide recreational activities for seniors at the renovated former National Guard facility that was converted to a Senior Center. This facility has a fitness center, areas for social activities, and support for meal programs. Programs are offered to enhance the quality of life, including fitness, recreational, and learning for life programs. The facility is already largely being used to its full capacity to support the substantial demand for these programs and services.

## II. Level of Service Analysis

The purpose of a level of service analysis is to assess the supply vs. the demand of the parkland system. The supply of parkland available to the public has been established as part of the inventory analysis of this chapter; however, a simple listing of resources does not give an accurate depiction of service. To provide a more accurate representation of parkland supply, a spatial analysis of the park system has been completed. To complement the supply portion of the equation, the demand portion of the analysis is done through a park equity evaluation. These analyses have replaced the historic metric used by the State of 30 acres of parks and recreational land per 1,000 population that was the default goal for counties to reach in the past. The new metrics offer a more functionally accurate determination of where gaps in service can be found so that plans can be formulated to address them.

### i. Park Equity Analysis

The process of measuring park equity combines GIS mapping information and census data to provide graphic representations to assist planners in determining the best locations for future parks. It was developed by the State of Maryland to provide a basic quantitative tool to help expand public access to nature for underserved communities, by employing national, state and local data in a consistent and strategic manner.

The park equity analysis identifies various demographic measures, as well as the location, amenities and accessibility of parks at the census tract level. A combined score, using the weighted measures noted at right, is computed for each census tract.

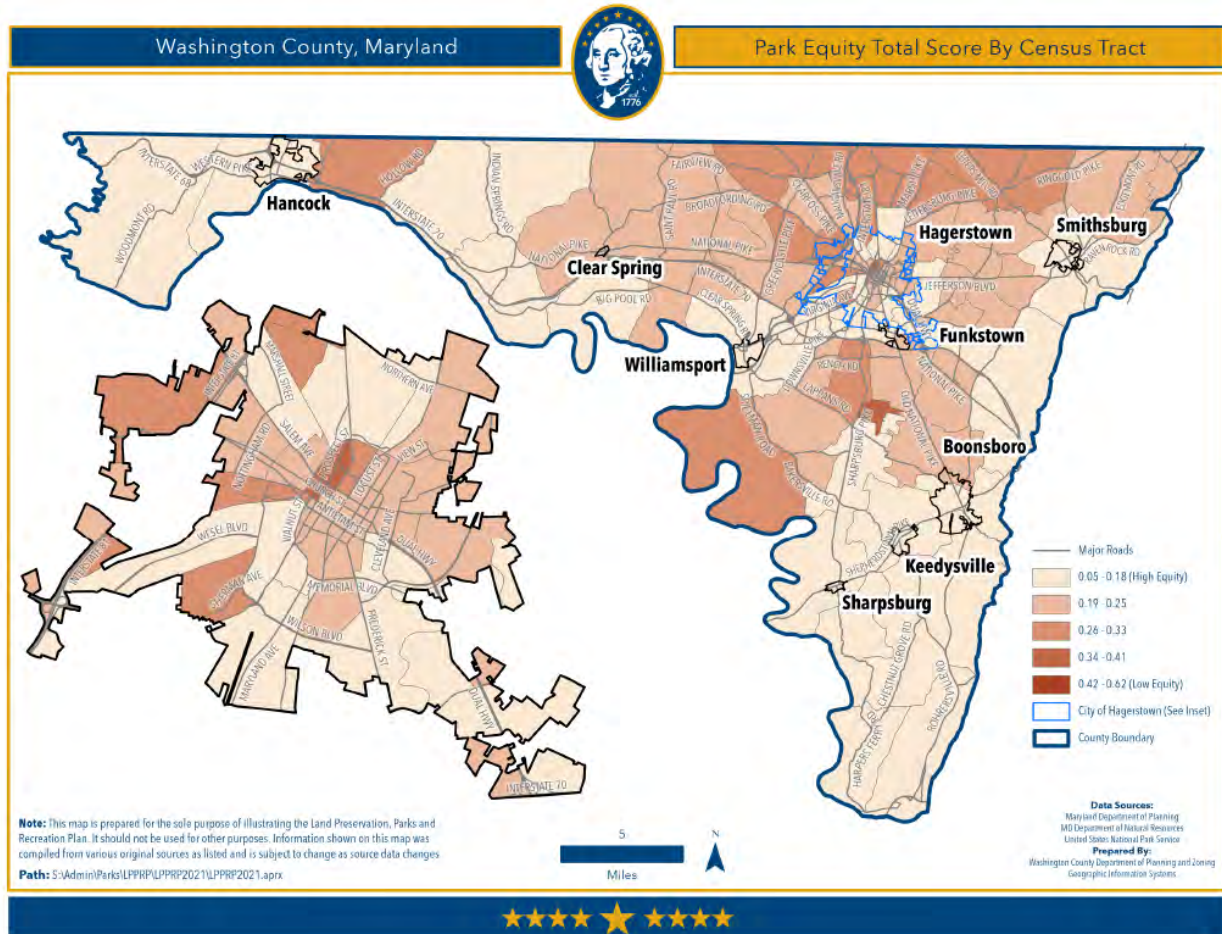
Areas with higher combined scores are considered underserved and in need of additional access to parks or natural areas.



#### Equity Criteria:

- Population Density
- Concentration of Low-Income Households
- Concentration of children under age 17
- Concentration of Adults over Age 65
- Concentration of Non-White Population
- Distance to Public Park Space
- Distance to Public Transportation
- Walkability





Map 5: Park Equity Map for Washington County, MD

As shown on Map 5 above, the census tracts with the lowest equity scores are found in the Jonathan Street neighborhood of Hagerstown and in two census tracts along Sharpsburg Pike near its intersection with Lappans Road. The Jonathan Street neighborhood is currently served by Wheaton Park as well as the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center. Therefore, the low equity score in that location can be taken as being more representative of the demographic characteristics occurring in the census tract than the lack of access to proximate parks or recreation facilities.

Since 2017, the City has added two new parks (National Road Park and Thomas Kennedy Park) and expanded its Cultural Trail within 1 mile or less from this census tract. The County has also committed to making significant improvements at the Community Center to upgrade and modernize the aging facility that is still used extensively by many groups in the neighborhood. These additions to the City's park system complement twenty other parks within its jurisdictional limits.

The two census tracts along Sharpsburg Pike showing a low equity score contain State of Maryland correctional facilities which skew demographic data. Therefore, these tracts do not truly represent an area of need that can be targeted for park development.

The next tier of census tracts which possess relatively low equity scores are located:



- North of Hagerstown to the Pennsylvania border,
- Between Broadfording Road and National Pike west of Hagerstown,
- On Sharpsburg Pike between the I-70 interchange and Lappans Road,
- East of the Town of Hancock, and
- Along the Potomac River west of Downsville.

Of the locations cited above, the areas north of Hagerstown and along Sharpsburg Pike represent locations where population density drives a higher demand for new parks and recreation facilities. Both of these areas have seen notable amounts of residential development over the last two decades. North Central County Park, a regional park, will help significantly to meet park needs north of the City. The Park will be located near the intersection of Marsh Pike and Leitersburg Pike. Construction of this park cannot commence until access is gained to the land by the extension of Eastern Boulevard to Leitersburg Pike.

Residential development along the stretch of Sharpsburg Pike noted above occurred, to a significant extent, during the early 2000s housing boom and then tapered off during periods of the national recession until picking up again in recent years when previously subdivided land from that period began to finally build out. Commercial development along this stretch of roadway, such as the construction of a new Walmart Supercenter, has also spurred investment. At present, Doubs Woods Park and Marty Snook Park do offer access to park lands for residents living in this area on the north side of I-70. Westfields, the largest residential subdivision along Sharpsburg Pike, also has its own private community center, pool and tennis courts. Rockland Woods Elementary School, where the County has a joint use agreement to use the gym for recreational programming, is located within the Westfields subdivision. Finally, the Washington County Agricultural Education Center, located roughly 5 miles to the south, hosts community events throughout much of the year and is open to public rental and use.

The other areas included in the list above would have a lesser need for new park facilities for the reasons that follow:

- The Broadfording Road/National Pike area west of Hagerstown is zoned for industrial development, which is already beginning to occur.
- The census tract east of Hancock is sparsely populated and does have access to the Town parks, the Western Maryland Rail Trail and the C&O Canal Towpath.
- A similar setting can be found west of Downsville where there are low population densities and there is public access the Towpath. The Potomac Fish & Game Club also offers substantial access to the Potomac River for members.

It should be explicitly noted that none of the above mentioned areas in this subsection currently rise to the level of a gap in service that warrants immediate park development. Instead, areas such as north of Hagerstown and along the Sharpsburg Pike corridor represent places where the County is presently looking to provide recreational amenities and opportunities to support localized residential growth in those locations.

Equity scores may also show disproportionate needs in areas of low population density, such as near Downsville or east of Hancock, in identifying focus areas for new park development. The close proximity of such locations to State and Federal Parklands, coupled with the high cost of providing services to small number of local residents living in those areas, reveal that new park development would be far more impactful in other areas of the County.



It should be noted however, that the County works closely with its incorporated municipalities, particularly in the distribution of Program Open Space Funds, to make sure that money for both park acquisition and development is available throughout Washington County. Therefore, new parks or amenities are not solely being developed in the County's Urban Growth Area while ignoring the needs of its rural communities.

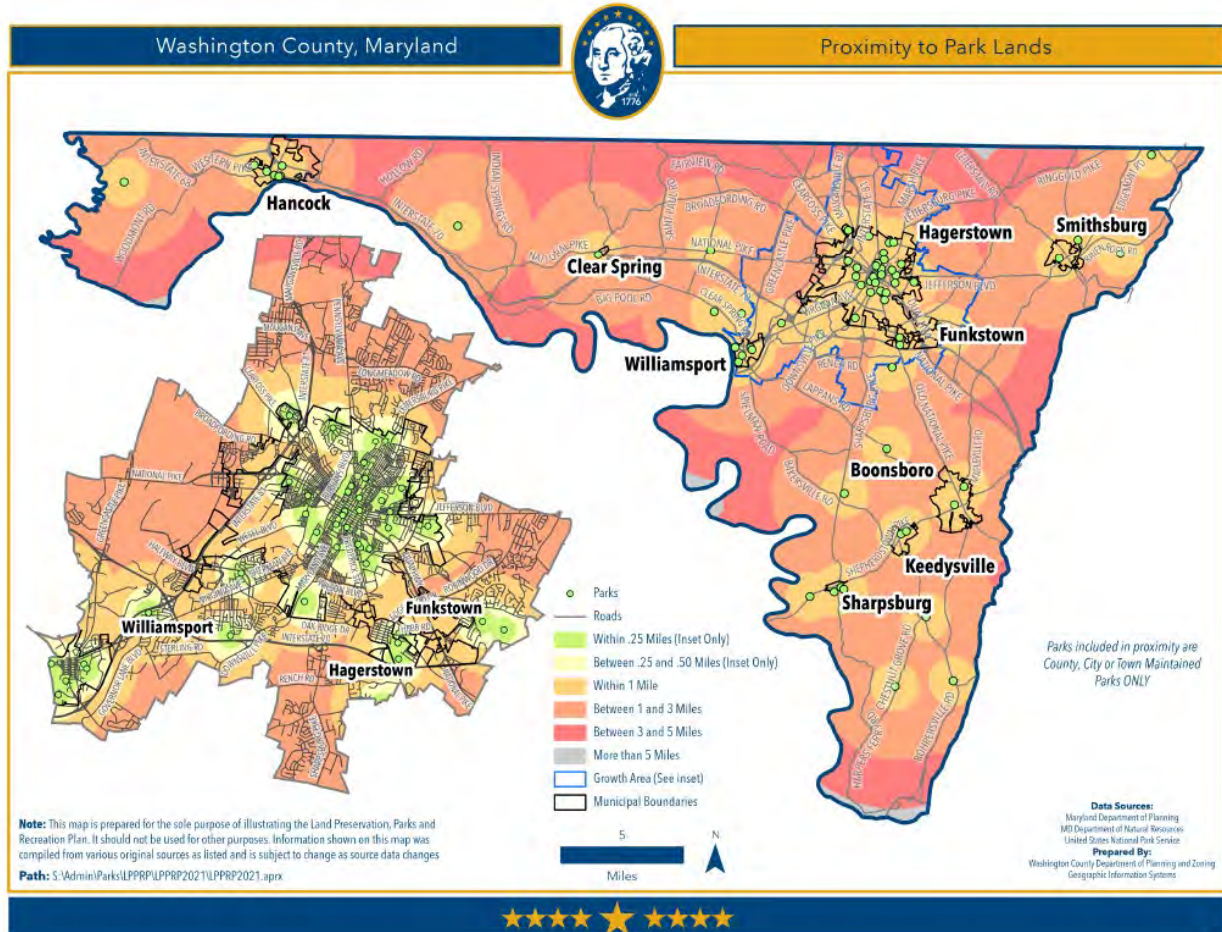
ii. [Park Proximity Analysis](#)

Using the County's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, a spatial analysis was conducted to determine the proximity of County and municipal parks to the public. Two scales of spatial analysis were utilized: a large-scale countywide catchment area to cover rural areas and a smaller-scale catchment area to analyze the more highly developed urban areas. The rural scale analysis includes catchment areas of one, three, and five miles were mapped to determine if there are any gaps in service to the public. A five-mile catchment area was determined to be the furthest acceptable distance from a park because it represents an approximate 10-15-mile drive or reasonable bike ride. The one-mile catchment area corresponds to a reasonable walking distance.  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile catchment areas are also shown on the inset map of the County's designated Urban Growth Area around the City of Hagerstown and the Towns of Williamsport and Funkstown to highlight proximity to park facilities in the most developed area of Washington County.

As shown on Map 6, nearly the entire County is within five miles or less of a County or municipal park. Given the above statement, no true gaps are found in the park proximity map aside from a few very small areas along the County perimeter which are explained in further detail below in the paragraphs that follow.

Largely, long-term needs on the Park Proximity Map mirror those found on the Park Equity Map to a substantial extent. Long-term needs are greatest along the northern border with Pennsylvania, various spots along the Potomac River bordering Virginia and West Virginia, and on the Frederick County border near the I-70 corridor.





Map 6: Park Proximity Map for Washington County, MD

Looking more closely at these results, the area of greatest benefit would be north of Hagerstown to the Pennsylvania border. While these areas don't exceed tolerable limits of proximity, mapping shows a lesser density of County owned parks. Town or semi-public parks, or joint use school facilities are located in Maugansville and Leitersburg to the northwest and northeast of Hagerstown in this area, but no regional scale parks at present. This is where the planned North Central County Park would again make a significant impact on access to park facilities for residents living in the northern fringes of the Urban Growth Area.

It should be noted as well that, for people living in Washington County along the Pennsylvania border, there are a number of community parks (Antrim Township Community Park, several in Waynesboro) just across the state line in Pennsylvania which likely serve resident needs in those areas. They are not included in the proximity analysis and the County cannot take credit for their provision, but they do help to alleviate park needs along state lines. These parks offer recreational facilities, natural areas and trails.

The other locations indicated as being between 3-5 miles from a park are largely covered by state and federal park facilities. The C&O Canal towpath runs along the County's entire Potomac River border and the Western Maryland Rail Trail parallels it in the vicinity of Hancock to the Allegany County border. Woodmont Natural Resource Management Area and Sideling Hill Wildlife Management Area can be found in the westernmost portion of Washington County. North of Clear Spring is Indian Springs Wildlife



Management Area, which satisfies recreational needs for many in that portion of the County. Greenbrier State Park, the Appalachian Trail and South Mountain State Park serve the lands along the Frederick County border. In addition to the C&O Canal towpath, the southernmost tip of Washington County contains part of Harper’s Ferry National Historic Park, and another portion of the Appalachian Trail. Thus, due both to these existing facilities and low population densities, these areas would be considered lesser priorities for new park development.

Smaller catchment areas (1/4 -1/2 mile) are also shown within the Urban Growth Area around Hagerstown, Williamsport and Funkstown due to the density of park facilities provided within a concentrated area. Areas of moderate need (between 1-3 miles from a park facility) are found in the following locations:

- North of Hagerstown,
- Between Broadfording Road and Clear Spring Road west of Hagerstown,
- South of Williamsport and east of Governor Lane Blvd,
- On Sharpsburg Pike between the I-70 interchange and Lappans Road,
- In the vicinity of the I-70/I-81 interchange, and
- In the Jefferson Boulevard/Robinwood Drive area west of Hagerstown

Most of these areas have been previously discussed in relation to park planning in the equity analysis. The area zoned for industrial or commercial development west of Hagerstown encompasses the lands north and south of National Pike between Clear Spring Road and Broadfording Road, dominated by the Hopewell Valley Industrial Park. The area east of Governor Lane Boulevard is also dominated by industrial development before giving way to areas that remain in an active agricultural use. Long range transportation plans that call for widening of I-70 and I-81 throughout Washington County makes park development in the vicinity of the interchange infeasible anytime in the near future.

The Jefferson Boulevard and Robinwood Drive area east of Hagerstown is an area that contains a fairly high density of residential development around community anchors such as Meritus Medical Center and Hagerstown Community College. Both the College, Black Rock Golf Course and Regional Park already serve recreational needs in this area to a great extent. The forthcoming trail system to be constructed in the undeveloped southern portion of Regional Park will further alleviate needs in the area.

It should be noted that all picnic facilities are contained within existing Federal, State or Local parks. Therefore, the proximity to picnic areas would mirror that of the park proximity map displayed above.

### iii. [Access Analysis](#)

Another aspect to level of service that was measured as part of the development of this plan was to evaluate opportunities for access to various recreational activities. Responses from the public survey indicated that the most popular park facilities or amenities used by citizens were trails (for walking/running/hiking/biking) as well as community places (playgrounds, picnic areas). Greater access to water based amenities (both in urban and rural areas) was also cited frequently in the survey as being desired by the public. Thus, the following mapped analyses provide the baseline for many facilities or amenities cited as being valued or desired by County residents.

County GIS data was again used to map proximity of natural features as well as access to trail and



water access. Because of the rural nature of Washington County, it would be expected that most participants of these activities will travel by automobile to access recreation opportunities so a five-mile catchment area was used to depict a reasonable (10-15 minute) drive to access these features. Also, included on the maps is a three mile and one-mile catchment area that shows a reasonable biking or walking distance from said features.

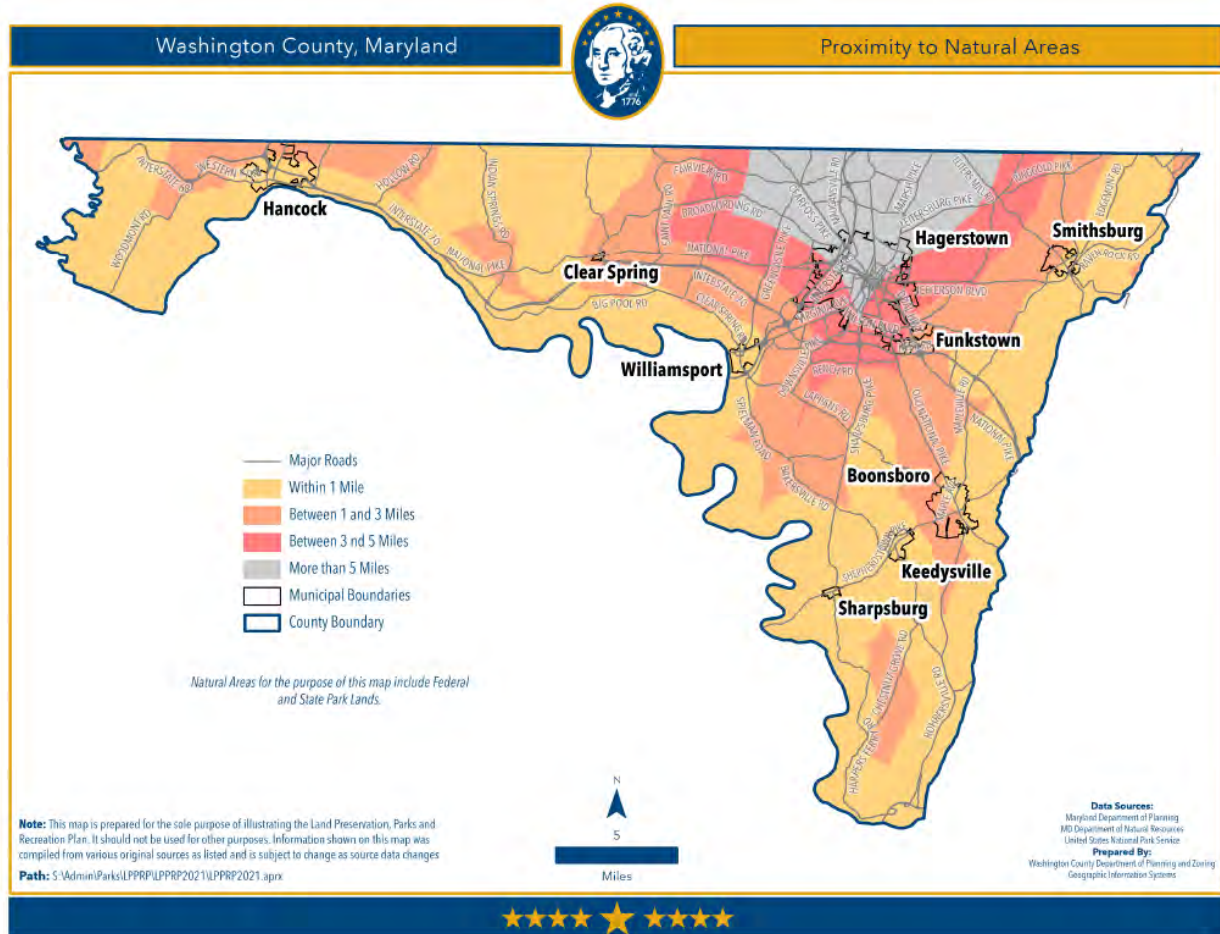
➤ **Proximity to Natural Areas**

Map 7, below, shows the proximity to federal and state park lands. The park proximity and park equity analyses previously shown accounted for only county, city or town maintained public park facilities. Thus, Map 7 reinforces the conclusions previously stated in the park proximity and park equity analyses which indicated that prevalent gaps along many County borders were not true service gaps because federal or state park lands existed in those locations. Map 7 therefore shows that the vast majority of lands in the County are within 3 miles or less from a park and presents a truer indication of where efforts toward new park development should be focused.

As one might expect based upon population densities and prior data reported in this plan, the areas of greatest need are centered in or around the County's Urban Growth Area. The area north of Hagerstown is the only area of the County where residents are located more than 5 miles from a federal or state park. As previously indicated, public community parks and/or semi-public park facilities are located within this gap in Maugansville and Leitersburg, so the area is not truly devoid of any park facilities. The North Central County Park will also be located in this gap once constructed.

It is important to note that this is the general location of the Hagerstown Regional Airport. While not mutually exclusive to one another, there are some compatibility issues with having large natural areas near the Airport. Most of the incompatibility stems from wildlife habitats created as part of natural areas. For airport operations, especially in rural areas such as Washington County, wildlife is a significant hazard that can be disruptive or even dangerous. As mentioned previously, the enhancement of natural areas in the vicinity of the Airport is not impossible, but is of a lesser priority than elsewhere in the County.

The next ring of lands showing a lesser proximity to state and federal natural areas (between 3-5 miles) occurs in a belt around all sides of the Urban Growth Area except the northern border with Pennsylvania. The conditions and potential for park development in these areas were previously discussed in the park proximity and park equity analyses.



Map 7: Proximity to Natural Areas for Washington County, MD

➤ **Proximity to Water Access**

As shown on Map 8, below, the majority of the County is within 3 miles or less from an access point to various water features. The primary source of water access in the County is the Potomac River. More than 100 miles of river shoreline are contained in Washington County and there are numerous public access points along its length. The County’s partnership with the Maryland Public Access, Water Trails, and Recreation Planning program has been used to build upon existing water trails designated by the State of Maryland. The most prominent water trail is the Upper Potomac River Water Trail which spans from Shepherdstown, WV to Cumberland, MD. This trail has been designated as an invaluable resource for paddlers, boaters, and anglers. In addition, there are nine primary tributaries that drain into the Potomac River. Nearly all of these tributaries have sections which are navigable.

Among these tributaries, the County has focused its greatest efforts to develop true Water Trails along the Antietam and Conococheague Creeks. Of these two waterways, development of the Antietam Creek Water Trail has advanced the furthest with access to the Creek being provided at 11 different points throughout the County. Additional funds are earmarked in the County’s current CIP for further development of this Water Trail.

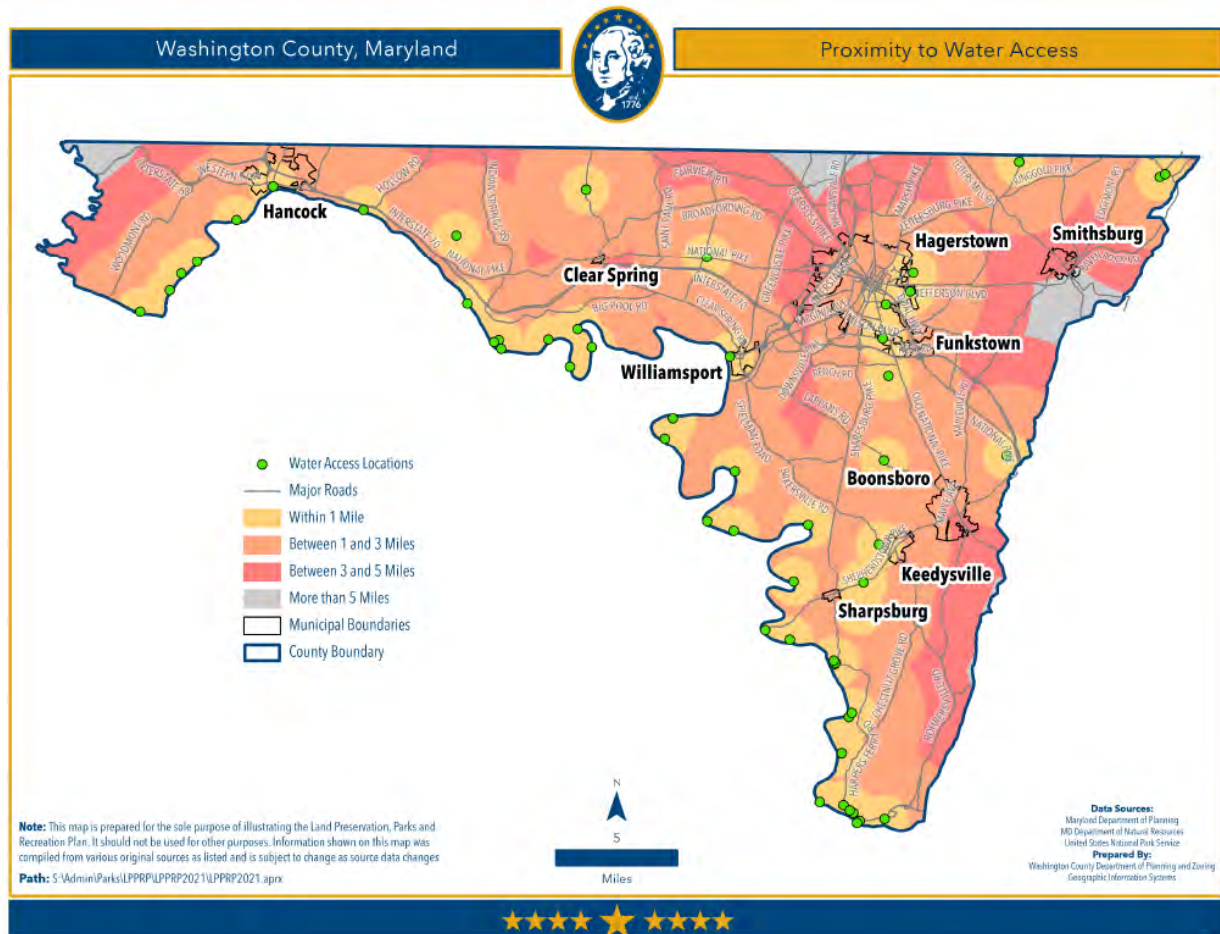
The Conococheague Creek Water Trail is at an early stage of development. The waterway is





already navigable to great extent for much of the year as the second largest tributary of the Potomac in Washington County. Public access is more limited at this point however, with put-ins located at Cresspond Road, Earth Care Road, Wilson Bridge County Park, the Kemps Mill Dam and at the Creek’s outlet into to the Potomac River at Williamsport. Access points are also used on private lands at a few of other points along the Creek. Currently, \$370,000 is currently identified in the CIP toward development of the Conococheague Creek Water Trail within the timeframe covered by this LPPRP.

Once completed, the Antietam Creek and Conococheague Creek Water Trails will significantly address the area of need shown on the map below immediately west of Hagerstown. This is important because the development of water access within the area of need running from roughly the Pennsylvania border to the rural village of Downsville is limited to a significant degree by zoning and existing land uses. Much of it is either already developed industrially or planned for development of that intensity and character. In addition, some lands within that corridor have been targeted in County agricultural land preservation programs through the establishment of Agricultural Districts on select parcels, or by their inclusion in the County’s designated Priority Preservation Area. Therefore, these Water Trails would provide access to water resources within a proximity of 3-5 miles for this area of need.



Map 8: Proximity to Water Access for Washington County, MD

It should be noted that the water trails mentioned above, and shown on Map 8, are represented in the County’s Parks and Recreation Inventory only in the inclusion of public park lands owned by either the County or other local jurisdiction which provide water access. The County pursues a range of



strategies to provide water access, ranging from property acquisition, obtaining access easements from private landowners, and working out informal agreements with other entities (i.e. – a put-in/takeout at the Funkstown Fire Co.). In most cases, however, the County does not own the lands which provide access to waterways used by the public. The Potomac River Water Trail, for example, is accessed almost entirely through boat ramps that are part of the C & O Canal National Historic Park. The only locally-owned public access points would be Riverbottom Park in Williamsport, which is shown on our inventory. Therefore, not all access points shown on Map 8 are included in our Parks and Recreation Inventory.

Outside of pursuing major capital projects (i.e. - the artificial lake at Greenbrier State Park) it is difficult to address water access in the mountainous areas of the County. The County is making improvements to the artificial lakes at the former Fort Ritchie military base as a part of redevelopment efforts that are proceeding incrementally in a positive direction. In the southern portion of the County, residents and visitors also have access to fishing at Brownsville Pond along Rohrersville Road. West of Hancock, the gap that is noted in the map is relieved somewhat by the Potomac River access points as well as the area's proximity to Little Tonoloway and Sideling Hill Creeks located to the east and west.

➤ **Proximity to Trail Access**

Even though the County is fortunate to have an extensive network of existing trails on federal, state and local park lands, greater access to trails and paths were the most frequently mentioned new park amenity sought in the public survey. Map 9 indicates that much of the County is located within 3 miles or less from a trail.

The proximity analysis does however show a gap along the Pennsylvania border from Rockdale Road to Leitersburg. There are multiple limiting factors that have led to this gap in service relating to the compatibility of the land use policies in the area including:

- The influence of the Hagerstown Regional Airport. Trails are not necessarily incompatible with airports but visitor experiences in preserved lands adjacent to such areas are less than ideal due to noise and other externalities resulting from operations. Trail development in the vicinity of the Airport is possible, however other locations in the County where visitor experiences would likely be better will be sought out first.
- The Leitersburg/Ringgold area east of the Airport falls within the County's designated Priority Preservation Area (PPA). These lands are therefore specifically targeted for permanent retention in an agricultural land preservation easement which is placed on private land. Lands north and northeast of Clear Spring to the Pennsylvania border also fall within a PPA.

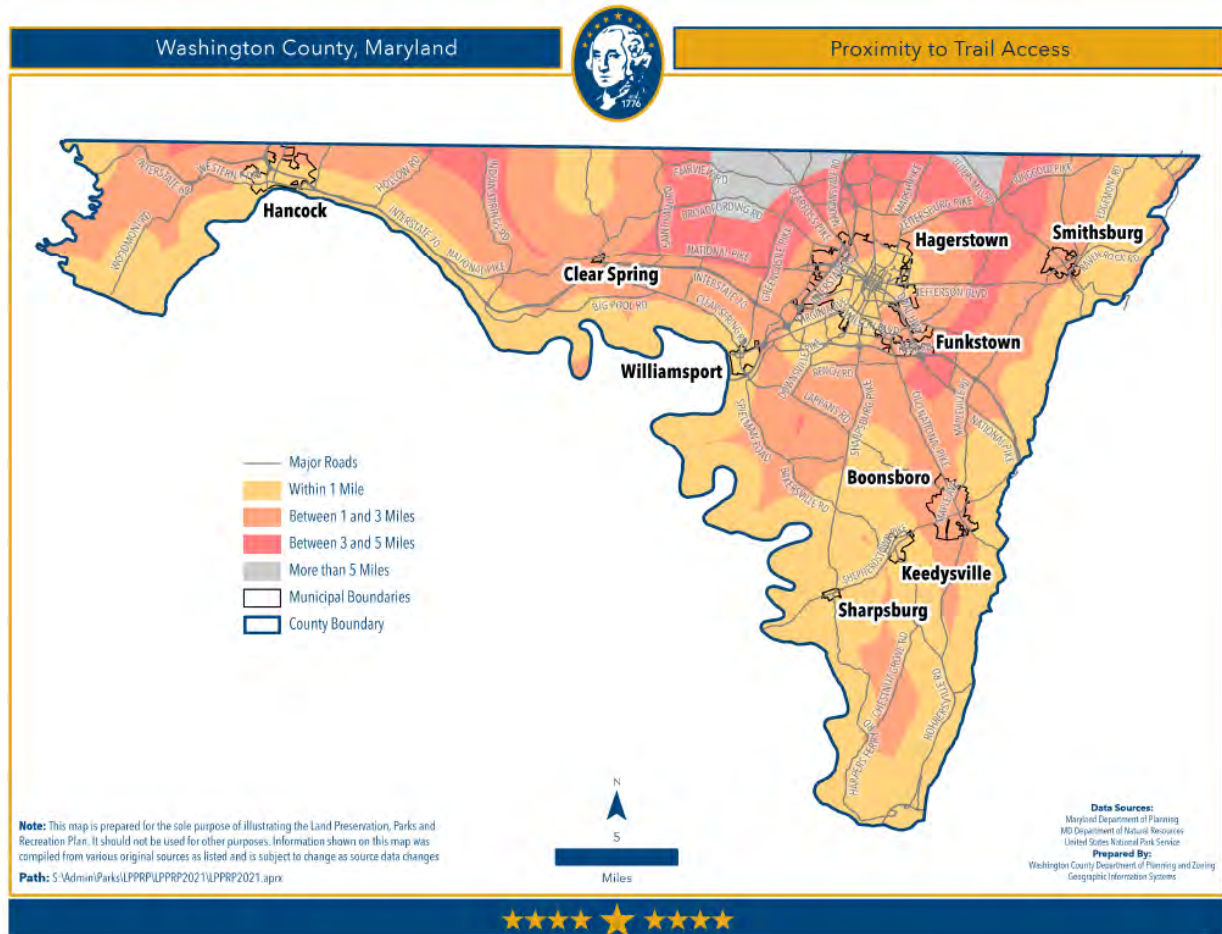
Map 9 also shows an area of moderate need running parallel to the gap cited above, where lands west, north and northeast of Hagerstown are 3-5 miles from a trail. Much of these lands fall within the County's Urban Growth Area where the intensity of development and private ownership makes trail development more difficult. Lands along the National Pike corridor east of Hagerstown, and surrounding Hagerstown Regional Airport to the north, for example, have been zoned for high intensity commercial and industrial development. Finally, Conococheague Creek, which bisects significant lands between Clear Spring and Hagerstown, consists mostly remote rural resource lands with limited road access and public infrastructure from which to gain access to develop new trails





or other park facilities beyond access points for the Water Trail.

The new trail system to be developed at Regional Park would help to alleviate recreational needs for a portion of the belt of lands from Funkstown northeast to the Pennsylvania border which is located between 3-5 miles from a trail. With the exception of the trails associated with the disc golf course at Regional Park, no others exist in this immediate area.



Map 9: Proximity to Trail Access Map in Washington County, MD

#### iv. Level of Service Analysis Conclusions

Identifying commonalities among each of the preceding level of service analyses, it is possible to draw some larger conclusions about where new parks or recreation facilities are needed. First, both the equity and proximity analyses indicate the bulk of Washington County is within 5 miles or less from a public park facility, water access point, or trail. While it is true that the County is blessed to have significant federal and state landholdings supplementing its park system, the County, City of Hagerstown, towns and rural villages all make significant contributions to the creation of a network of public recreational facilities that already meet the majority of the needs of residents and visitors alike.

Locations of the highest priority in the equity and proximity analyses has pointed most directly to a need for more parks and open space within or immediately around the Urban Growth Area surrounding Hagerstown, Williamsport and Funkstown. On County lands, the northern border with Pennsylvania is clearly an area of long-term need, despite land use conflicts placing some limitations on where, and to



what extent, new park facilities can be developed in some parts of this region.

The Sharpsburg Pike corridor immediately south of the I-70 interchange would likely rank next highest in terms of geographic regions of the County for new park facilities. Though that corridor is being developed commercially to a great extent at the moment, residential subdivision activity has built a notable population base in that area already and current trends indicate that will likely continue in surrounding the roadway in the vicinity of the Urban Growth Area.

The equity analysis also indicated areas of long-term need for parks or open space within select areas of the City of Hagerstown. The intensely developed footprint and lack of vacant land in the central part of the City often makes it necessary for local leaders to be nimble and opportunistic in finding places where redevelopment can result in park system expansion. Thus, the City has typically pursued incremental improvements to facilities and amenities in existing parks in interim periods between acquisition opportunities that impact residents on the neighborhood and community scale. Improvements of this nature have already positively impacted some of the census tracts shown as possessing lower equity scores.

County CIP funding and POS grants have continued to focus on parklands located within the UGA. Yearly fluctuations in POS funding, escalating costs associated with various aspect of development in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic and many other fiscal realities place limitations on how much can be accomplished from an acquisition perspective within the relatively short time periods covered by the LPPRP. Accordingly, many local jurisdictions, including those in Washington County, mostly shifted their focus to maintenance and system preservation rather than acquisition and expansion of services. As the economy continues to rebound locally and nationally however, opportunities to pursue larger acquisition projects in and around the Urban Growth Area that would expand the park system and provide additional services in areas where there is a defined need already appear to be in the pipeline.

### **III. Goals for Parks and Recreation**

#### **i. General Context Information**

As noted previously, Washington County owns and maintains 18 parks or recreational facilities. These facilities offer varying combinations of passive recreational uses, such as picnic areas and playgrounds, and space for more active uses such as field/court based recreation. Typically, the size and context of the location are the largest factors in determining the range of amenities provided at a given county park. The County also owns and operates Black Rock Golf Course.

The Washington County Recreation Department provides youth and adult recreation and fitness classes, seasonal programs such as the popular Jim and Fay Powers Music Series, heritage based educational programs, and many organized leagues for all ages. Most are offered in public parks or in county school facilities with joint use agreements and allow the County to share space with school activities.

Local and municipal parks supplement those services described above. Due to the scale of available space, they primarily focus on providing space for more active forms of recreation such as play fields, hard court sports, playgrounds, swimming pools, and indoor recreation centers.

The combined efforts of these entities yield free or highly affordable opportunities for residents



throughout the County to realize many tangible benefits that improve individual and community health. The public provision of these amenities helps to remove barriers to entry for many individuals and families who may find the cost of comparable services offered by the private market to be prohibitive. In this way, the County is able to offer residents a baseline quality of life regardless of their social status.

## ii. County Goals and Objectives for Parks, Facilities and Recreation Programs

Washington County has been and will continue to be a proactive agency in administering recreational opportunities to its citizens. The Goals and Objectives listed below represent the on-going collaboration of Staff, the Parks Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners to provide exemplary recreational facilities and opportunities in the County.

### The County park system, consisting of Neighborhood, Community and Regional Parks, shall equitably locate recreational facilities for the convenience and benefit of the greatest number of people.

#### Objectives

- Locate parks and recreational facilities based on a site selection process which includes population distribution, transportation accessibility, anticipated growth as projected in the Comprehensive Plan for the County and which is responsive to the physical requirements of the development program.
- The County will coordinate with local jurisdictions in the location, acquisition and development of parkland to avoid duplication and create synergy between investments in parks and facilities.
- Cooperation with special interest groups such as historical societies, preservation groups, and non-profit organizations, etc., will be emphasized to serve the dual purpose of resource conservation and parkland acquisition.
- Strengthen and integrate regulatory and decision-making processes related to the acquisition of parkland and open space to more effectively grow the system to meet residents' needs. Consider the implementation of regulations such as requiring parkland dedication by developers of major residential subdivisions in the County, tax incentives, fee reductions, or partial donations with some fee simple acquisition made by the local jurisdiction.
- Joint use agreements between the Board of Education and municipal officials (where appropriate, that offer reasonable use for the public) should continue to be established and refined to make all County schools available for recreation use.
- Account for the provision of parks and recreation facilities and services by private and quasi-public entities that are accessible to the general public in determining areas where the need for new public services exist.

### Provide facilities that support the holistic health and wellbeing of the community.

#### Objectives

- Develop facilities that support a system of pedestrian/bicycle trails, greenways, and/or waterways. Prioritize completion of projects identified in existing long range transportation plans and studies in service of creating this comprehensive network.
- Whenever practical, work with diverse partners in service of connecting parklands and open



spaces to enhance system wide accessibility, offer transportation alternatives and achieve protection of key natural resources.

- Target underserved neighborhoods and communities, as well as locations without proximate access to parks and open space, for the creation of new parks or park amenities.
- Provide open space and recreational fields to support sports leagues and programs.
- Provide opportunities and space for relaxation, learning, and socialization to promote individual well-being and community cohesion.
- Consider and provide for both active and passive recreational opportunities in the provision of park facilities and amenities.
- Recognize the important role that parks play in enhancing community quality of life and spurring economic investment in surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Maintain the existing park infrastructure in a manner that considers future user needs and service upgrades.**

#### **Objectives**

- Sustain a maintenance and replacement schedule that keeps existing park infrastructure in good condition and maximizes the value of capital expenditures.
- Anticipate the needs of the community to offer facilities, amenities and other improvements that support changing preferences of park users.
- Incorporate updated building code requirements and standards in facility upgrades.
- Sustainably fund the parks and recreation system to maintain consistency in the quality of facilities and services provided to the public. Maximize the impact of outside funding streams such as Project Open Space allocations and pursue competitive grants to leverage local spending on parks and recreation. Allocate available funds to local jurisdictions based upon priority needs that are clearly defined in application requests.

### **Design parks and recreation facilities to preserve, protect and enhance natural and cultural resources.**

#### **Objectives**

- Implement park infrastructure that considers opportunities to reduce the effects of stormwater, mitigates flooding, and improves air quality.
- Implement park facilities that reduce energy consumption, water use, and waste.
- Consider opportunities to convert traditional impervious spaces to environmentally resilient and sustainable facilities.
- Utilize the parks system to enhance contributions to the arts, community beautification and preserve and interpret cultural or historic resources.
- Consider multi-modal transportation uses in park location and design to reduce automobile dependency and remove access barriers for park users.
- Where appropriate, investigate opportunities within parks to meet compliance with various environmental regulations and reduce park maintenance costs through tree planting and other measures.
- Evaluate the inventory of all undeveloped or underutilized lands owned by local jurisdictions for their potential to be used in service of projects that achieve recreation and conservation purposes. Portions of these lands with limited development potential, such as those located



in floodplains or adjacent to road or utility corridors should also be considered for the development of trails, multi-use paths and other linear projects.

### **Provide a safe and secure environment for the users of the County Parkland System.**

#### **Objectives**

- When feasible, walkways, trails and parking areas should be well lit to deter illicit activity and foster user safety and comfort.
- Include local law enforcement officials in the development of new parkland facilities to provide insight into potential hazards.
- Secure park facilities after hours and provide routine patrols and other security measures to reduce vandalism and vagrancy.
- Playground equipment shall be installed to factory specifications, labeled with recommended age ranges and safety information should be displayed within the area of the playground equipment to inform its users of proper usage.
- Conduct a review to determine the condition of existing park and recreational facilities and their compliance with generally accepted safety standards.

### **Coordinate recreational programming to meet the diversified needs of County citizens.**

#### **Objectives**

- Provide recreational opportunities for all users regardless of their age, ability, sex, race or ethnicity and socio-economic status.
- Account for projected demographic shifts identified in long range plans in the provision of recreation programs such as the growing needs of seniors and an increasingly diverse local population.
- Devise County recreational programs to meet the needs of the public and support organized recreation leagues.
- Provide central coordination and direction of organized recreational programs to avoid duplication of services and facilitate the common use of all available resources.
- Utilize diverse methods of communication and community outreach to maintain strong public awareness of available recreation opportunities throughout the County.

### **Provide a strategy for facilitating additional indoor recreational facilities throughout the County.**

#### **Objectives**

- Evaluate existing indoor facilities in the County and pursue renovations and conversions to provide additional indoor recreational space.
- Pursue public-private partnerships to facilitate development of multiuse indoor recreational facilities.
- Collaborate with public schools to secure joint-use agreements for community recreational gymnasiums.



- Pursue "sharing" or "host" operation and/or maintenance agreements with special interest groups, leagues, and other organizations.

In support of the goals and objectives for parks and recreation planning, the Washington County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has also adopted specific policies to clarify and strengthen the decision-making process for the use and development of County Parks:

1. Recreational facilities should be designed to competition standards to attract league and tournament use.
2. Scheduling and staff support of County recreational facilities should allow for maximum use by groups and organized leagues. Care should be taken to ensure that the needs of the public are also met.
3. Open Space funds should be allocated to projects large enough in scope to benefit a wider spectrum of users.
4. Municipalities and organizations requesting County assistance should submit applications with sufficient information to allow the Parks Board to compare and prioritize projects.
5. Maximum public use should be made of recreation facilities at all public-school sites. Supervision and maintenance assistance should be provided to the Board of Education by the Board of County Commissioners to implement this policy.

### **iii. State Goals for Parks and Recreation**

As mentioned previously, parks and recreational facilities are a cooperative effort among numerous partners including the public, private conservation organizations, and other governmental organizations. Below are the goals adopted by the State of Maryland for parks and recreation facilities, as well as a short explanation of how the County's goals complement those of the State.

- **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.** *Washington County parks provide a wide range of environments and facilities which are located throughout the County. Programs offered by the Recreation Department provide opportunities for all ages and skill levels.*
- **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.** *Aside from the natural beauty evident in the various parks, they offer access for aquatic activities, music appreciation, and as the location for cultural and social events.*
- **Use State investment in parks, recreation, and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local comprehensive/master plans.** *County use of State and Federal funds has coordinated directly with the Comprehensive Plan for Washington County, and in support of the plans of the various municipalities who have received the funds.*
- **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.** *Park sites with a larger variety of facilities are situated near population centers.*





*Parks whose main attraction is based on natural amenities are, by their nature, often located at a distance from developed areas. County and State highways are well maintained in these areas and offer convenient vehicular access; many are also well suited for access by bicycle.*

- **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.** *Washington County has supported new parkland acquisition and improvements in existing parks in the municipalities through a disproportionate use of open space funds over the past few years.*
- **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.** *The projections for population growth currently being promulgated in the update of the Comprehensive Plan for the County, when factored against parkland acquisition plans currently in process, show that Washington County will continue to exceed the required ratio for the period covered by the Comprehensive Plan update.*

#### [Maryland Project Green Classrooms \(Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature\)](#)

The Maryland Project Green Classrooms project is a renewal and reaffirmation of Governor O'Malley's Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature. It is a public-private partnership intended to provide opportunities for children to learn more about their local environment and develop their environmental literacy. According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, *"The initiative serves as an advisory body, working collectively across multiple disciplines and public and private sectors to identify gaps and barriers, and make recommendations to decision-makers regarding solutions that will bring about change in the areas of environmental literacy, nearby nature, and career pathways for youth."*

Washington County has also fostered the development of environmental literacy through the operation of the Fairview Outdoor Education Center. Since 1979 the Board of Education has provided the opportunity for all 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to spend a full week at the center get a hands-on experience with environmental literacy programs. In addition to this program, numerous other middle and high school classrooms participate in sporadic field visits learning about stream health and restoration, forest stand ecology, and wildlife research.

#### **IV. Program Implementation**

To support parkland acquisition and park development, Washington County uses various methods including public funding, land use regulations, and purchase of property to achieve the goals and meet the needs of the community. These methods are meant to accompany existing State and Federal programs in the County to provide a well-rounded funding plan.

##### Planning

As with most aspects of planning for future growth, parks, recreation and open space needs are first evaluated as part of the Comprehensive Plan for the County. The goals, objectives, and recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan which relate to these areas of interest are then refined and expanded upon in the LPPRP. In the currently adopted Comprehensive Plan, there is emphasis placed on providing "recreational locations and sites that will create the opportunity to pursue various active and passive



leisure activities.”<sup>6</sup> More specific recommendations to implement this goal are scattered in different sections of the Plan which shows how diverse and important parks, recreation, and open space facilities are in the overall health of a community.

Comprehensive Plan Recommendations relating to parks, recreation and open space are as follows:

#### **Chapter 4: Economic Development**

- Infrastructure Improvements: Target infrastructure improvements such as road widening to areas where there is a need to facilitate the movement of farm equipment or to facilitate recreational or heritage tourism promotion.

#### **Chapter 5: Transportation Element**

- Continued development of an urban sidewalk system on State roads utilizing the State Highway Administration’s statewide sidewalk program should remain a priority.
- Linkage between greenways and facilities for bicycle and pedestrian movement needed to optimize the use of these resources.

#### **Chapter 8: Environmental Resource Management**

- A needs assessment should be done to see if more swimming facilities are needed in the western and southern portions of the County.
- Assessments should be done along local waterways to determine the possibility of adding more boat launches along the smaller waterways for non-motorized boating.
- Specific recommendations for recreational water facilities promoting swimming, boating and fishing should be incorporated in future Land Preservation and Recreation Plan updates.

#### **Chapter 9: Community Facilities**

- Interconnectivity, accessibility, and safety should be foremost among the guiding principles for the detailed study necessary to establish specific greenway trail locations.
- A variety of recreation facilities and programs should be offered to citizens in the County regardless of sex, age, or race. Both public and private recreation service providers should coordinate to the extent possible to ensure efficiency of services and to avoid duplication.

#### **Chapter 10: Historic and Cultural Resources**

- If an opportunity arises, consider development of a County park with historical aspects or theme or incorporate historic resources into an existing park where available and appropriate.

The County’s update of its Comprehensive Plan is currently in progress. Present parks and open space needs discussed in the LPPRP are informed by the draft version of the Plan and will be incorporated into its forthcoming policies and recommendations.

### **Regulatory Land Development Ordinances**

Another method used by the County in obtaining parks and open space areas is through regulatory tools such as the Subdivision Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance. These ordinances provide rules, policies and general guidance for land development in the County.

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<sup>6</sup> 2002 Washington County Comprehensive Plan; Chapter 2 Goals and Objectives, page 13.



Policies with these ordinances offer opportunities for developers to be flexible in project design through options such as cluster plans, mixed-use or multi-family developments. Clustering of residential lots is permitted on parcels 10 acres or greater, with the undeveloped remainder devoted to open space or recreation areas maintained either by the County or an HOA. Under zoning regulations, mixed-use districts require a minimum of 5% - 20% of the lot or parcel area to be devoted to open space, depending on the specific combination of land uses proposed. Mixed use districts must also provide comprehensive pedestrian pathways to facilitate internal circulation patterns by non-motorized means of travel. Design and performance standards are also provided for play lots serving children and young adults within multi-family developments which define minimum sizes, siting considerations and setbacks from adjacent land uses. Pedestrian uses are required to be considered in the design of multi-family developments as well, both within the development and connecting to offsite facilities and services.

The purpose of these flexible design districts is to incentivize the allocation of open space areas within the development by allowing smaller lot sizes and/or increased density. This promotes a win-win scenario between the community and the developer by creating recreational open space area at no value loss to the developer.

### Joint Use Agreements

Coordinating recreation and education activities at schools is an important part of the facilities plan. Utilizing the buildings and surrounding grounds as joint school-recreation centers provides indoor and outdoor facilities for neighborhood activities and interaction and allows the center to serve as a focal point for education, recreation and related activities for the surrounding community or town. This multiple use concept is strongly endorsed in the Comprehensive Plan for the County and is consistent with several of the State Visions discussed in the Introduction.



**Photo 5: Youth Volleyball at  
Hagerstown Community  
College**

In practice, the County and the Board of Education work together to plan recreational facilities in the early stages of designing school sites. During the design phase, Staff from each organization work closely together to size both indoor and outdoor facilities to make the investment as efficient and fiscally responsible as possible. Once the facilities are constructed, the School Board has joint use agreements with the Parks and Recreation Department regarding tennis courts, track use and maintenance, and utilizes a School Facility Use Agreement to help coordinate use of buildings and scheduling of fields on school property. Currently these agreements apply to five different County schools, including Maugansville, Pangborn, Rockland Woods, Ruth Ann Monroe and Sharpsburg Elementary Schools.

## **V. Capital Improvement Plan**

### Land Acquisition and Facility Development

Land acquisition and facility development activities are implemented through various funding programs such as Program Open Space (POS), excise tax, and general fund revenues from the County. Excise tax and general fund money is budgeted for through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

In the County's FY 2022-2031 CIP, \$7,867,244 was budgeted for Parks and Recreation projects.



The following table shows itemized funding allocations for the ten-year period from 2022-2031.

Parks and Recreation									
Washington County Capital Improvement Program 2022-2031 (Adopted)									
Project	Total	Prior Approval	Budget Year	Ten Year Capital Program					
			FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	Future	
Black Rock Capital Equipment	\$293,618	\$68,618	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$125,000
Black Rock Clubhouse Renovation	\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Hardcourt Playing Surfaces	\$202,140	\$76,140	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$51,000
Park Equipment or Surfacing Replacements (Various)	\$1,912,286	\$212,286	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$875,000
Parking Lot Repair or Overlay (Various)	\$642,200	\$142,200	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$250,000
Antietam Creek Water Trail	\$477,000	\$25,000	\$252,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Bathroom or Drinking Fountain Upgrades	\$300,000	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$150,000
MLK Gymnasium Upgrade	\$375,000	\$25,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Clear Spring Park Building	\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marty Snook Dog Park	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Regional Park Walking/Hiking Trail	\$690,000	\$0	\$690,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Ag Center Show Area Floor	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Conococheague Creek Water Trail	\$370,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000
Doubs Woods Disc Golf	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Field Improvements (Marty Snook & Regional Parks)	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marty Snook Park Fitness Trail	\$300,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$300,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marty Snook Park Pool Accessible Entrance	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$0
North Central County Park	\$1,400,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Recreation Field Bleachers (Various)	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Regional Park Dog Park	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Roof Replacements (Various)	\$225,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$125,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$7,867,244</b>	<b>\$599,244</b>	<b>\$1,602,000</b>	<b>\$590,000</b>	<b>\$675,000</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>	<b>\$645,000</b>	<b>\$3,006,000</b>	

**Table 11: Washington County Capital Budget for Parks and Recreation (2022-2031)**

The Capital Improvement Plan reflects a response to the concerns and desires reflected in the Park Survey, tempered by economic reality. Acquisition remains a priority but is limited by fiscal constraint. Therefore, the primary approach of the Parks and Recreation budget is to provide an aggressive repair and renovation schedule to keep existing facilities at a level which maintains the high degree of satisfaction reported by current users.

The draft FY 2023 – 2032 CIP for County Parks and Recreation is shown below. It has not yet gained formal



adoption.

Parks and Recreation								
Washington County Capital Improvement Program 2023-2032 (DRAFT)								
Project	Total	Prior Approval	Budget Year	Ten Year Capital Program				
			FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	Future
Black Rock Capital Equipment Program	\$359,618	\$29,618	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$100,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$130,000
Hardcourt Playing Surfaces	\$342,890	\$105,890	\$126,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$6,000	\$75,000
Ag Center Land Development	\$198,000	\$98,000	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Park Land Acquisition - REC033	\$593,800	\$193,800	\$400,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Park Equipment or Surfacing Replacements (Various)	\$1,969,674	\$934,674	\$160,000	\$0	\$175,000	\$0	\$0	\$700,000
Parking Lot Repair or Overlay (Various)	\$475,896	\$75,896	\$0	\$0	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$250,000
Antietam Creek Water Trail	\$362,000	\$192,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$15,000	\$55,000	\$0	\$0
Bathroom or Drinking Fountain Upgrades (Various)	\$435,000	\$185,000	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$100,000
MLK Gymnasium Upgrade	\$1,700,000	\$200,000	\$1,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Roof Replacements (Various)	\$362,500	\$187,500	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$125,000
Ag Center Show Area Floor	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Ag Center Indoor Multipurpose Building	\$4,750,000	\$0	\$4,050,000	\$450,000	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Black Rock Bunker Rehabilitation	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250,000	\$0	\$0
Conococheague Creek Water Trail	\$310,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000	\$180,000	\$120,000
Doubs Woods Disc Golf	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Field Improvements (Marty Snook & Regional Parks)	\$125,000	\$0	\$125,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Kemps Mill Park Trails	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marty Snook Park Fitness Trail	\$300,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$300,000	\$0	\$0
Marty Snook Park Pool Accessible Entrance	\$150,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$150,000	\$0	\$0
Mt. Briar Wetland Preserve Trails and Conservation Area	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
North Central County Park	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$300,000	\$1,500,000
Park Entrances and Security Upgrades	\$200,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0
Pen Mar-Fort Ritchie-Cascade Trail Connection	\$290,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000	\$120,000	\$0	\$0	\$120,000
Recreational Field Bleachers	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Regional Park Dog Park	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$15,649,378</b>	<b>\$2,202,378</b>	<b>\$6,611,000</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$900,000</b>	<b>\$1,055,000</b>	<b>\$711,000</b>	<b>\$3,170,000</b>

Table 12: Washington County Draft Capital Budget for Parks and Recreation (2023-2032)

Traditionally, POS funding has been primarily allocated to the local municipalities for improvement to their park systems. The reason for this policy is based in the reality that there are higher population densities in this area and the funds could enhance a larger pool of County citizens.





Since 2017, greater priority has been placed on prioritizing needs among the funding requests to determine where specific needs are greatest in a given year. Thus, while the same basic principle of distributing POS funds to recipients throughout the County remains an accurate general description of how funds are distributed, more attention is now paid to where funds can make the greatest impact in satisfying unmet needs in the provision of park facilities irrespective of jurisdiction.

**Table 13: Washington County POS Projects (FY 2022)**

<b>FY 2022 Approved Program Open Space Projects Washington County</b>				
Sponsor	Project	Project Cost	POS Development	POS Acquisition
Hagerstown	Fairgrounds Park - Skatepark	\$705,000	\$150,000	
	Park Play Equipment & Amentities (Various)	\$79,000	\$70,000	
Hancock	Kirkwood Park - Engineering, Excavation & Drainage Improvements	\$83,000	\$74,700	
	Widmeyer Park & WMRT Corridor	\$85,000	\$25,000	
Keedysville	Taylor Park - Pavillion Upgrades	\$18,690	\$16,821	
Sharpsburg	Sharpsburg Historical Park - Interpretive Plaza <b>Land Acquisition (.54 acres)</b>	\$63,000		\$63,000
Smithsburg	Veteran's Park - Grading Gazebo Access Road & ADA Parking with Lighting	\$92,843	\$83,559	
Washington County	Antietam Creek Water Trail - <b>Land Acquisition (3.1 acres)</b>	\$42,000		\$42,000
	Clear Spring Park - <b>Building Acquisition (.18 acres)</b>	\$90,000		\$90,000
	MLK Gymnasium Upgrades	\$637,500	\$157,500	
	Marty Snook Park - Dog Park	\$50,000	\$45,000	
	Black Rock Golf Course - Clubhouse Renovations	\$90,000	\$67,000	
	Regional Park - Trail Network	\$690,000	\$70,000	
WCPS	Springfield Middle School - Pickleball Courts	\$65,000	\$58,500	
Williamsport	Byron Memorial Park - Springfield Mansion <b>Land Acquisition (7.92 acres)</b>	\$1,105,000		\$103,000
	Billy Doub Park - ADA Sidewalk Installation	\$42,585	\$31,939	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$3,938,618</b>	<b>\$850,019</b>	<b>\$298,000</b>
<b>Total Acquisition and Development*</b>				<b>\$1,148,019</b>
<b>FY 2021 POS Allocation</b>				<b>\$1,131,771</b>

\*Remaining balance covered by existing unencumbered funds

Washington County's draft list of POS projects for FY 2023 is shown below.



**Table 14: Washington County POS Projects Draft (FY 2023)**

FY 2023 Draft Program Open Space Projects Washington County				
Sponsor	Project	Project Cost	POS Development	POS Acquisition
Boonsboro	Shafer Park - Masonry Repair/Renovation	\$225,000	\$202,500	
Funkstown	Poplar Street Park Development	\$225,000	\$202,500	
Hagerstown	Fairgrounds Park (North) Play Equipment	\$120,000	\$108,000	
	City, Fairgrounds & Pangborn Parks Play Equipment & Amenities	\$55,000	\$49,500	
	Fairgrounds Park Stable Roof Replacement*	\$134,000		
HCC	ARCC Bleachers & Curtain Divider Replacement	\$281,650	\$150,000	
Keedysville	Taylor Park Gazebo	\$27,060	\$24,354	
Sharpsburg	Sharpsburg Park Play Equipment	\$72,000	\$64,800	
Smithsburg	Lions Park Basketball Courts	\$25,000	\$22,500	
	Veterans Park Basketball Courts	\$25,000	\$22,500	
Washington County	Ag Center Horse Ring & Event Space	\$219,000	\$164,000	
	Doubs Woods Land Acquisition (2.81 acres)	\$425,000		\$425,000
	Doubs Wood Playground Equipment	\$160,000	\$135,000	
	Regional Park - Multisport Court	\$150,000	\$113,000	
	Marty Snook Park - Bathroom Upgrades*	\$50,000		
	Marty Snook Park - Pavillion Repairs & Roof Replacement*	\$25,000		
	Marty Snook Park & Regional Park Field Improvements	\$125,000	\$112,500	
WCPS	Smithsburg Elementary Play Equipment & Trail Connection	\$70,000	\$63,000	
Williamsport	Byron Memorial Park - Springfield Mansion Land Acquisition (7.92 acres)***	\$1,105,000		\$300,000
<b>Totals****</b>		<b>\$2,413,710</b>	<b>\$1,434,154</b>	<b>\$725,000</b>
<b>Total Acquisition and Development**</b>			<b>\$2,159,154</b>	
<b>FY 2021 POS Allocation</b>			<b>\$1,746,741</b>	

\* Project to be funded by Local Parks and Playground Infrastructure once allocated

\*\* Remaining balance covered by existing unencumbered funds

\*\*\* Acquisition total includes FY22 request

\*\*\*\* Total Project costs exclude Springfield Mansion (No application submitted for FY 22-23 requests)

In addition to POS funding, the County makes every effort to pursue available State and Federal grant funding when available to create additional recreational opportunities. For example, the County receives funding and technical assistance for water access-based facilities from DNR's Public Access and Water Trails Program and the Waterway Improvement Program in service of developing the Antietam and Conococheague Creek Water Trails. In addition, for the development of a new trail system at Regional Park, the County received a federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant and an MDOT SHA Recreational Trails Grant. These fiscal resources help Washington County to supplement local spending



on parks and recreation to significantly degree.

Since the City of Hagerstown and incorporated towns do not produce their own LPPRP, this Plan helps to identify local needs and priorities for capital development of parks and facilities in these jurisdictions. The City’s draft 5-Year schedule of projects that will likely be submitted for Program Open Space requests to the County is detailed below. Two other projects of note that may occur in the City during the scope of this Plan, include the replacement of Municipal Stadium with an indoor sports facility called the Hagerstown Field House, and the construction of a new baseball stadium in downtown Hagerstown. These projects are detailed in the next section of the Plan which discusses the implementation of the 2017 LPPRP.

**Table 15: City of Hagerstown 5-Year POS Plan (Draft)**

<p align="center"><b>CITY OF HAGERSTOWN</b>  <b>5-YEAR PROGRAM OPEN SPACE</b>  <b>PROPOSED PLAN FY23-27 (Listed By Priority)</b>  <i>Draft Prepared 10/06/21, Updated 11/19/21</i></p>						
<b>FY</b>	<b>CIP #</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Location/Description</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>POS Fund Request</b>	<b>City Match</b>
2023	C0237	Fairgrounds Park Play Equipment	Fairgrounds Park – replacement of modular play equipment near the North Pavilion	\$120,000	\$108,000	\$12,000
2023	CO237	Park Play Equipment and Amenities	Grass mound in City Park (\$20k) Picnic Tables, Park Benches, Portable Bleachers (\$35k)	\$55,000	\$49,500	\$5,500
2023	C0626	Stable Roof Replacement	Fairgrounds Park – replace remaining stable roofs	\$70,000	\$63,000	\$7,000
2024	C0522	Parking Improvements	City Park: Upper lot near tennis court	\$250,000	\$225,000	\$25,000
2024	CO439	Amenities for City Park Train Hub	Youth oriented items, hands-on activities, signage, new programs	\$50,000	\$45,000	\$5,000
2024	C0061	Visitors Center, Phase I	Hager House – Phase I renovation of the visitors center	\$250,000	\$225,000	\$25,000
2024	C0293	Wheaton Park	Add'l Play Equipment, Picnic Area, Misting Pad/Splash Pad, Fitness Court	\$200,000	\$180,000	\$20,000
		High Resolution	On Golf Course adjacent Route			



**CITY OF HAGERSTOWN**  
**5-YEAR PROGRAM OPEN SPACE**  
**PROPOSED PLAN FY23-27 (Listed By Priority)**  
*Draft Prepared 10/06/21, Updated 11/19/21*

<b>FY</b>	<b>CIP #</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Location/Description</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>POS Fund Request</b>	<b>City Match</b>
2024	---	Electronic Message Board	40, advertise City special events	\$80,000	\$72,000	\$8,000
2025	C0047	City Park Lake Improvements	Replace walls around perimeter of upper and middle lakes, sidewalk improvements, and landscape enhancements; dredge lake, permanently repair leak under causeway	\$500,000	\$200,000	\$300,000
2025	C0522	City Park New Restrooms	Construct new restrooms on Museum Drive	\$150,000	\$135,000	\$15,000
2025	C0522	City Park Gazebo	City Park – construct gazebo by Mansion House	\$20,000	\$18,000	\$2,000
2025	C0522	City Park Mansion House Rehab	City Park Mansion House – repaint porch, reconstruct railing, replace front steps, repair rear wall	\$30,000	\$27,000	\$3,000
2025	C0061	Visitors Center, Phase II	Hager House – Phase II renovation of the visitors center	\$150,000	\$135,000	\$15,000
2025	C0439	Train Museum	Train Museum – replace roof on Museum	\$10,000	\$9,000	\$1,000
2026	C0774	Antietam Creek Greenway Trail	Construct greenway trail from Howell Road to Funkstown (land must be donated first)	\$480,000	\$432,000	\$48,000
2025	C0825	The Greens at Hamilton Run Improvements	Course improvements such as cart paths, tee box and green improvements	\$100,000	\$90,000	\$10,000
2026	C0626	Parking Improvements	Fairgrounds Park: Rear parking lot below BMX	\$250,000	\$225,000	\$25,000



**CITY OF HAGERSTOWN**  
**5-YEAR PROGRAM OPEN SPACE**  
**PROPOSED PLAN FY23-27 (Listed By Priority)**  
*Draft Prepared 10/06/21, Updated 11/19/21*

<b>FY</b>	<b>CIP #</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Location/Description</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>POS Fund Request</b>	<b>City Match</b>
2026	C0626	Soccer Field Lights	Fairgrounds Park: add lights to soccer field for evening use	\$170,000	\$63,000	\$107,000 by others
2027	C0626	Fairgrounds Park Entrance Building Renovation	Fairgrounds Park – renovate entrance building/gatekeeper’s house	\$500,000	\$450,000	\$50,000

Town planning for parks and recreational needs tends to occur on a year to year basis due to the limited fiscal resources that most of these small local jurisdictions have to work with. FY 2022 POS requests from the towns were noted previously in this section. In soliciting further information on key projects from the towns in the next 5 years, responses included the following:

➤ **Funkstown**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>	<b>POS Funds Requested</b>
<b>FY 2023</b>	Octagon Pavilion, Grills & Electrical Upgrade	Poplar Street Park	\$225,000	\$202,500
<b>FY 2024</b>	Multi Use Trails & Pavilion	Artz Farm Park	\$300,000	\$270,000
<b>FY 2025</b>	Acceleration/Deceleration Lanes into the Park	Artz Farm Park	\$150,000	\$135,000

➤ **Sharpsburg:** Welcome park highlighting points of interest and interpreting the town’s history (3 lots off of Church Street, approximately 1.25 acres, estimated cost \$125,000 - \$160,000); handicap accessible dock and walkway at Town Pond (estimated cost \$75,000); playground equipment addition at community park to serve kids 5 and under (\$50,000 estimated)

➤ **Smithsburg**

**FY 2023** Resurfacing/Rehabilitation of Basketball Courts at Veterans & Lions Parks

**FY 2024** Rehabilitation of Lions Park Pond at Lions Park

**FY 2025** Splash Pad at Veterans Park

**FY 2026** Walking Trail Loop at Lions Park





**FY 2027 Rehabilitation of Baseball Fields at Veterans & Lions Parks**

Table 14 below, distills the information presented above for various jurisdictions in Washington County into a concise table showing land acquisition projects that are either currently in progress, or identified in their respective Capital Improvement Plan. These land acquisitions, in combination with the myriad development projects detailed previously, demonstrate a commitment to provide recreational amenities and services throughout Washington County.

**Table 16: Current and Proposed Land Acquisition Projects**

Sponsor	Location	Acres	Costs	Year
<b>Sharpsburg</b>	S/S E. Main Street and 130 East Main Street	.54	\$63,000 (Project) \$63,000 (POS)	FY 22
<b>Washington County</b>	Antietam Creek Water Trail – Antietam Drive and Security Road	3.1	\$42,000 (Project) \$42,000 (POS)	FY 22
<b>Washington County</b>	Clear Spring Park – Building Acquisition	.18	\$90,000 (Project) \$90,000 (POS)	FY 22
<b>Washington County</b>	Doubs Woods Park – Parcel 895	2.81	\$425,000	FY 23
<b>Washington County</b>	North Central County Park – Parcel 15	90	TBD – Phased Development	Concurrent with extension of Eastern Boulevard to Leitersburg Pike
<b>Williamsport</b>	Byron Memorial Park – Springfield Mansion	7.92	\$1,105,000 (Project) \$103,000 (POS FY 22) \$197,000 (POS FY 23)	FY 22/23

**VI. Progress Toward Achievement of Goals and Recommendations**

The County’s progress towards achieving the goals and recommendations of the 2017 LPPRP and its plan for meeting future parks and recreation needs are displayed in the tables that follow and elaborated on in accompanying discussion below each.

**i. Implementation of 2017 LPPRP**

Recommendations from the County’s 2017 LPPRP, which represent the concrete action items resulting from that Plan’s goals, are included the table below. Further explanation of the County’s progress towards meeting these recommendations are detailed following the table.

**2017 LPPRP Recommendations**

Open Space and Parks and Recreational Land Goals Established in 2017	Type and Specific Location	Acreage Needed	Acreage Acquired
<b>Parkland Acquisition</b>	➤ Pennsylvania Avenue extending north to Longmeadow Road	Needs are moderate for these areas	➤ \$1.4 million identified in current CIP for



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Marsh Pike and Leitersburg Pike</li> <li>➤ Maugansville Rural Village</li> <li>➤ Sharpsburg Pike corridor from I-70 south to Lappans Road</li> <li>➤ Cascade/Pen Mar/Ft. Ritchie (taking advantage of redevelopment in the area)</li> <li>➤ Jefferson Boulevard/Robinwood Drive</li> </ul>	based upon proximity and equity analyses	planning, design and construction of North Central County Park once extension of Eastern Boulevard complete
<b>Greenways/Rail Trails/Water Trails</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Antietam Creek</li> <li>➤ Conococheague Creek</li> <li>➤ Weverton to Roxbury Corridor</li> </ul>	Proximity analysis shows majority of County (outside of mountainous areas) located less than 3 miles from water access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To date, the Antietam Creek Water Trail includes 11 public access points</li> <li>➤ \$370,000 identified in current CIP for Conococheague Creek Water Trail</li> </ul>
<b>Joint Use of School Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Countywide</li> </ul>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ongoing discussions with BOE to include Sharpsburg Elementary on list of schools permitting joint usage</li> </ul>
<b>Bicycling and Pedestrian Safety and Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Primarily Urban and Town Growth Areas</li> </ul>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Several miles of dedicated bicycle lanes added in City of Hagerstown</li> <li>➤ Sidewalk construction providing access to Paramount Elementary under Safe Routes to Schools program</li> </ul>



			and in numerous other locations throughout County to meet ADA compliance
<b>Community Recreation Centers</b>	➤ Urban Growth Area	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Multi-phased improvements to MLK Community Center</li> <li>➤ Senior Center Improvements</li> </ul>
<b>Participation Survey</b>	➤ NA	NA	Survey updated and distributed to gain public feedback for this Plan

## ii. 2017 LPPRP Recommendations

### Parkland Acquisition

- Continue to pursue acquisition of additional parkland for active and passive recreational activities. Specifically, an analysis of park proximity and equity show needs in the following locations:
  - ◆ Pennsylvania Avenue extending north to Longmeadow Road
  - ◆ Marsh Pike and Leitersburg Pike
  - ◆ Maugansville Rural Village
  - ◆ Sharpsburg Pike corridor from I-70 south to Lappans Road
  - ◆ Cascade/Pen Mar/Ft. Ritchie (taking advantage of redevelopment in the area)
  - ◆ Jefferson Boulevard/Robinwood Drive

Most locations that showed a high need for park facilities on the 2017 park equity and proximity maps were found in the rural areas of Washington County that contain low population densities which are difficult to efficiently serve with new community infrastructure. Many of these rural areas showing high need are also within 5 miles or less from Federal or State park lands that serve to fill the gaps in provision of park facilities by municipal entities. Examples include those locations in the vicinity of the Appalachian Trail (which runs through several state parks along almost the entire eastern border of the County), the C & O Canal National Historic Park (which runs along the County's entire southern border), those north of the Town of Clear Spring (where Indian Springs Wildlife Management Area covers significant acreage) and west of the Town of Hancock (where Woodmont Natural Resource Management Area can be found among other State owned recreation facilities).

The City of Hagerstown was the primary municipality on the 2017 park equity and proximity maps that showed a high need for new park facilities among highly urbanized portions of the County. In addition to the extensive number of parks in Hagerstown which already existed in 2017, the City added a number of new parks and amenities since that time. Examples include National Road Park (immediately west of the downtown core), Thomas Kennedy Park (located downtown), and the ongoing improvements to the Cultural Trail (an Urban Plaza which will provide a multi-purpose space for various public institutions in downtown and the general public is presently under construction).



The bulleted locations cited in the recommendation above are mostly found in various parts of the County's Urban Growth Area, particularly in the northern and eastern portions. The County's current CIP allocates \$1.4 million to the creation of the new North County Park which is to be located in the northeastern part of the Growth Area near the intersection of Marsh Pike and Leitersburg Pike. The construction of North County Park awaits the completion of Eastern Boulevard Extended which will provide access to the parcel where the park will be developed. Eastern Boulevard Extended is currently slated to begin construction in 2025 according to the County's current CIP. This regional park would help to address the need for new park facilities in these areas, which are currently shown as being only a medium-high need at present.

The Jefferson Boulevard/Robinwood Drive area is already largely served by Washington County Regional Park. Regional Park will also see significant improvements in the construction of a new multi-use trail system in a currently undeveloped portion of the park as noted in the current CIP above. Significant development improvements at Regional Park likely to occur within the period covered by this LPPRP also include the installation of a multi-sport court, dog park, field irrigation, and sand volleyball courts. Hagerstown Community College, located on Robinwood Drive, also permits a degree of access to its recreational facilities for public events, as well as the campus grounds.

In the Maugansville area, park needs are alleviated somewhat by the existence of private and quasi-public facilities which are generally open to public use. These facilities include Maugansville Elementary (which has a joint-use agreement with the County) and Maugansville Community Park (which includes Little League fields and various recreation amenities found at the Ruritan Park). This area again only shows a moderate need for new park facilities on the proximity and equity analyses.

Preliminary concept plans are being examined for trail development in the Cascade area as well. The County is looking at the feasibility of establishing a trail system connecting Fort Ritchie, Cascade-Highfield and Pen Mar Park. Existing connectivity between these locations by non-motorized means is limited so such a network would offer an active transportation alternative and improve pedestrian safety. Also worth noting is that significant momentum has been generated of late in the redevelopment of the closed military base at the former Fort Ritchie. In the immediate term, this could have implications for improved water access. The County is looking to improve access to the two artificial lakes at the property which are already open to the public for fishing and boating but lacking in adequate facilities for easily pursuing these activities.

The Sharpsburg Pike corridor immediately south of the I-70 interchange has seen significant development in recent years. The character of this development has been primarily of a commercial nature, headlined by the construction of a new Walmart Supercenter. The commercial development has had the effect of removing the mostly single family homes that formerly lined this section of Sharpsburg Pike.

In the vicinity however, there has been construction of a fair number of mostly lower density residential units in various subdivisions. These newer subdivisions, in combination with those already existing in the area, constitute a notable region of demand for parks and recreation facilities within or just outside of the County's Urban Growth Area. At present, these residents are served mostly by Marty Snook and Doubs Woods Parks (located a few miles north or northwest) or the Ag Center (5+ miles south). Therefore, this corridor will continue to be looked at in future park planning as one of the next locations where new park facilities may be developed.



- Continue to develop strategies to acquire additional land and/or financial support for park acquisition and development during the development review process. Strategies could include land dedication during development review, incentives for land donation, land swaps, and/or impact fees.

Present mechanisms to achieve dedication of land for parks or recreational uses occur through the creation of a mixed use zoning district or through cluster subdivisions. These provisions create opportunities for open space that serve, at minimum, residents throughout the development. The County will continue to examine other methods to acquire open space as part of development review during the planning period.

In addition to those methods described in the recommendation, the County's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance offers another possible avenue. The Ordinance could potentially be amended to include the required provision of open space as part of project approval. Minimum thresholds for compliance with the Ordinance could exclude some developments from having to comply while including others. Impacts on public schools for example, apply only to major residential subdivisions (7 lots or greater) while excluding smaller subdivisions and other land use types that do not generate pupils (commercial, industrial, etc.). Similar constraints could be crafted in application to the provision of parks and open space.

- Evaluate existing governmental properties for potential adaptive reuse that could be used for recreational purposes. For example, lands at the Airport and closed landfills could provide areas for recreational activities that would not deter from the principle purpose of the property.

The County has successfully repurposed closed landfill sites for public purposes in the past. Pinesburg Softball Complex as well as Kemps Mill Park are located on closed landfill sites. Multiple other closed or inactive landfill sites have also seen the installation of solar energy generating systems which help to reduce utility costs for the County as well as greenhouse gas emissions. The County will continue to consider adaptive reuse of publicly owned lands, particularly those with limited development potential, during the planning period.

### Greenways/Rail Trails/Water Trails

- Depending on location, some local abandoned rail corridors could have potential for conversion to accessible walking and bicycling paths, with possible links to adjacent states. Discussion in recent years has focused on the abandoned CSX rail line extending from Hagerstown to Weverton Cliffs. The State of Maryland purchased the property in the mid-1990s and has offered the County an opportunity to implement a rail-trail facility within the right-of-way. There is a divide between the owners of properties adjacent to the railroad right-of-way who see this plan as a potential threat and other citizens in the County who see this as a potential benefit. More study and public input needs to be completed before additional progress can be made.

No further progress on the creation of this rail trail has been made since 2017 as the issue is still at a standstill in terms of conflicting local opinions. Citizens do remain interested in the idea however, as multiple comments were received in favor of the idea on the 2022 public survey and





the idea has been brought up in other public forums, such as citizen comments preceding meetings by the Board of Washington County Commissioners.

- Continue to work with local land owners with waterway frontage to create possible areas for public access. A recent donation by a local non-profit organization, Kiwanis, along Antietam Creek has provided one such example of this initiative.

The County has been very proactive in continuing to pursue public access to Antietam Creek in service of creating a formal Water Trail. Rose's Mill Park was newly added to the County's park inventory since 2017. This Park primarily serves as an access point for non-motorized watercraft to access Antietam Creek. It also provides picnicking facilities and included the restoration of an historic stone bridge and portions of the mill race associated with the mill located nearby in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to the creation of this new park, the County has submitted acquisition requests for POS funds to create additional access points at multiple points along Antietam Creek. Most recently this occurred for property near the intersection of Eastern Boulevard and Dual Highway in Hagerstown where another boat launch is planned. Currently, \$477,000 is identified in the CIP (including local funds as well as grant funding) for property acquisition, public access improvements, and installing new boat access at locations which include Antietam Drive, Security Road, Devil's Backbone, Keedysville Road, Roxbury Road and Shepherdstown Pike.

The County is also in the beginning stages of looking to establish a second water trail on Conococheague Creek. At present, \$360,000 is earmarked in the CIP to establish public access points on this major waterway. Stretches of both Antietam and Conococheague Creeks are located within or immediately outside of the County's Urban Growth Area and in rural areas identified as having a medium to high need for water access. Thus these water trails would significantly improve areas with identified needs for water access in both the 2017 and 2022 LPPRP's.

- Other conceptual greenways routes identified on the Comprehensive Plan Special Programs Map should be prioritized and evaluated for easement, connectivity, dedication, and public accessibility potential.

Connectivity of priority lands for the purposes of natural resource protection, improving access to recreational resources, and facilitating non-motorized transportation options will be an integral principle in the County's in-progress update of its Comprehensive Plan. The County will use various state and local data sets to identify and target such lands for protection and interconnection such GreenPrint, BioNet, Ranking Criteria for Forest Conservation Fund expenditures and more. Priority lands that possess fewer sensitive environmental resources that require greater protection will be looked at for their potential to provide public recreational access.

### **Joint Use of School Facilities**

- Continue to execute joint use agreements between the Board of Education and the Parks and Recreation Department regarding tennis courts, track use and maintenance and utilize a School Facility Use Agreement to help coordinate use of buildings and scheduling of fields on school property.



The County continues to implement recreation programs at four elementary schools which have joint use agreements. A fifth school, the newly constructed Sharpsburg Elementary, has recently been added to this list after consultation with the Board of Education.

- Design of new schools should include availability of services such as restrooms and water fountains to the participants and spectators. This includes access to these facilities for indoor and outdoor recreation programs. Security measures to restrict access of off-hour participants to the rest of the facility should also be a priority in design.

Building security and public access continue to be considered in new education facilities that include recreation amenities built using Project Open Space funds.

- Continue to coordinate with the Board of Education, where appropriate, on oversizing of gymnasiums to provide regulation size courts for various indoor sports such as volleyball and basketball. This has proven to be a practical and cost-effective method for helping to meet the needs of recreational demands.

The County is integrally involved in the development review of new school facilities and provides input to the Board of Education in evaluating the need to add additional oversize gymnasiums to serve public recreation needs.

### **Bicycling and Pedestrian Safety and Health**

Washington County has an excellent road network, historic towns, points of interest, and a scenic, pastoral landscape which attracts recreational bicyclists locally, and from nearby states and metropolitan areas. The C & O Canal towpath and the Western MD Rail Trail are additional tourist attractions that make the County a well-known destination for bicycle tourists. In addition, the City of Hagerstown has implemented an aggressive Bicycle Master Plan that has garnered them a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community designation by the League of American Bicyclist. To improve upon our bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the following recommendations are offered:

- Continue to work with the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) to implement the recommendations of their recently approved Regional Bicycle Plan.

The County continues to work closely with the HEPMPPO to implement the recommendations of 2016 Regional Bicycle Plan. The City of Hagerstown has also continued to implement the projects outlined in its 2016 Bicycle Master Plan Update. Numerous improvements to enhance bicycle safety throughout its jurisdictional boundaries have occurred, including adding bicycle lanes, pavement markings, bike racks and implementing road diets on select streets.

- Continue to seek funding opportunities through grant programs such as the Transportation Alternatives Program, Safe Routes to School Program, Federal Lands Access Program, etc.

The County continues to pursue diverse funding sources to leverage local spending on bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Maryland Bikeways grants were received by the City of Hagerstown in 2017 and 2018 in service of the bicycle improvements outlined above. The County received a federal



Land and Water Conservation Fund grant and an MDOT SHA Recreational Trails Grant for the multi-use trail network that will be developed at Regional Park. Sidewalks were extended along a stretch of Marsh Pike to improve safety for children walking to and from Paramount Elementary under the Safe Routes to Schools Program.

Conceptual plans are also being drawn up by the County to develop mountain biking trails as well as walking paths at Kemps Mill Park. This Park is located along a bend in Conococheague Creek where the County owns significant amounts of land in various public facilities on the peninsula. Grant funds as well as POS acquisition funds would likely be sought to implement this project if it moves forward.

- Coordinate among school, health, planning, and engineering officials, as well as community betterment groups, to contribute to the awareness of the many benefits of improving facilities and access to these facilities thereby increasing opportunities for bicycling and walking.

The City of Hagerstown has a standing Bicycle Advisory Committee who help organize the City's bicycle related activities and advise City staff. The Committee is comprised of citizens, elected officials as well as City and HEPMPO staff. Their focus includes bicycle event planning, working to increase the bike lanes and paths in the City, seeking grants and maintaining State and Federal contacts, promoting bicycle safety and education, and acting as a liaison with local bike clubs.

- Work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to promote local biking events and County bicycle facilities.

The CVB actively promotes bicycling events occurring in the County throughout the year. The CVB also distributes a Bicycle Tours brochure which details designated bicycle routes throughout the City and County. Beyond route descriptions, points of interest and wayfinding, the brochure also provides information on local bike shops, supportive services and safety tips.

### **Community Recreation Centers**

- Washington County and the City of Hagerstown share a long-range goal of providing a regional recreation complex (to possibly include an indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, multi-purpose rooms, and outdoor fields) located within the Urban Growth Area. Further discussion and study should be conducted to decide what types of recreational centers (i.e. aquatics, tennis, multi-purpose, etc.) would be most beneficial to the County citizens.

Both the general public and local leaders have expressed continuing interest in pursuing opportunities to create additional indoor community recreational space within the Urban Growth Area. The City of Hagerstown commissioned a feasibility study with Victus Advisors in 2018 to determine market demand, potential locations and general facility concepts for a youth and amateur sports complex. Fairgrounds Park was recommended in the study as the top potential site location among four places considered (The Greens at Hamilton Run; downtown Hagerstown; and Municipal Stadium). The firm recommended that the city consider developing "an indoor, multi-court, tournament-caliber sports facility" with four to six basketball courts, which could be converted into eight or more volleyball courts, and one to two indoor turf fields for soccer and lacrosse.



In the time since this study was conducted, local efforts have changed course somewhat and momentum has gathered behind the creation of a new minor league baseball stadium in Downtown Hagerstown. The facility would replace the aging Municipal Stadium, the former home of Washington Nationals minor league affiliate the Hagerstown Suns, as the home for a new minor league baseball team. The facility will be designed to host other sports, cultural, and community events.

The City is also looking at what to do with the vacated Municipal Stadium. Current plans are being pursued by the City to demolish Municipal and create an indoor turf facility. Concept ideas include having two turf fields, plus fitness and food and beverage areas. The City is working with Eastern Sports Management to develop drawings, a business plan and other details for the complex. Initial stages of the project's development have been approved by the City Council and there is the potential that construction could occur in the timeframe covered by this LPPRP.

The County's focus has been primarily in making incremental improvements at existing community centers that positively impact the communities they already serve. A notable example is the significant upgrades slated to occur to the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center in downtown Hagerstown using POS funds as well as other sources. The Community Center is located in a census tract exhibiting a low equity score on the park equity analysis. This building was constructed in 1950 and hasn't seen significant improvements since that time. Proposed upgrades, to be undertaken in phases as funding becomes available, include new flooring, amenities, bathrooms, drinking fountains, ADA accessibility, security, lighting and HVAC to maximize the utility of this space to the community.

The County is, however, also exploring the idea of creating a multi-use indoor facility at the Washington County Agricultural Education Center. There is already a need for additional event space at this location to facilitate core programming as the capacity of the existing facilities is largely maxed out during the warmer months of the year. Creating an additional indoor space would facilitate greater opportunities for programming to occur during winter months when the outdoor event spaces are less inviting for events. If a recreational component could be added to this new indoor facility, it would open up the Center to be able to hold a wider range of events and activities than can be accommodated with the existing facilities. The County will likely pursue federal and state grants to determine the feasibility of the project.

- Washington County opened a new Senior Center in 2015. The new facility is being used to near capacity and requests have been made to expand. Future growth of the facility should be evaluated for potential expansion.

Demand for senior activities remains high throughout the County as significant numbers of its citizens are entering retirement. Senior recreation programming is offered by many local jurisdictions throughout Washington County as well as the Washington County Commission on Aging. The existing Senior Center did see improvements since 2017 with the conversion of an outbuilding into a fitness area and the creation of a FitLot outdoor fitness area.

### Participation Survey

During the update of this document, the County developed and implemented a survey to determine the needs of citizens. While the survey was a good start and we received helpful insight and information,



the survey should be updated every few years and redistributed to ensure that changing demands are being met.

An entirely different format and method of distribution was implemented for the public survey to gauge public usage of parks and facilities, demand for new amenities and participation in recreation programs. The two-part survey, comprised of a questionnaire and an interactive mapping tool, were both distributed through various online platforms by the County’s Public Relations and Marketing Department. This survey was much more concise than the 2017 survey and aimed to more directly measure the metrics outlined in the 2022 LPPRP State Guidelines. The new format yielded both more responses than in 2017 as well as additional qualitative information that has helped to inform the writing of the current LPPRP.

### iii. 2022 Priorities and Recommendations

For the most part, the long term goals identified in the County’s 2017 LPPRP remain the primary actionable items to be studied or implemented during the next five years. This is because most associated projects require large capital expenditures, land acquisition, necessitate extensive planning and design work, and/or represent commitments that are of a continuing nature. These action items are listed in the table below and explained in greater detail following the table.

**2022 LPPRP Recommendations**

Open Space and Parks and Recreational Land Goals Established in 2022	Type and Specific Location	Acreage Needed	Plan for Meeting Need
<b>Parkland Acquisition - Short Term Goals (0-5 Years)</b>	➤ The northern portion of the Urban Growth Area from roughly Maugansville to Leitersburg and points north	➤ Phased development to occur on portion of 221.82 acre parcel	➤ North Central County Park to be constructed in multi-phased process with extension of Eastern Boulevard
<b>Parkland Acquisition - Long Term Goals (5-10 years)</b>	➤ Sharpsburg Pike corridor from I-70 south to Lappans Road	➤ Development or redevelopment on portion of 55 acre Agricultural Education Center	➤ Development or redevelopment at Ag Center of facilities supporting year-round recreation programming
<b>Parkland Development – Major System Enhancements (0-10 years)</b>	➤ Within the City of Hagerstown, particularly in or immediately around downtown	➤ Redevelopment of 9.25 acre Municipal Stadium site; Fairgrounds	➤ Proposed redevelopment of Municipal Stadium Site into indoor recreation





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regional Park</li> <li>➤ Cascade/Pen Mar/Ft. Ritchie</li> </ul>	<p>Park skatepark 1 acre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project to develop 4.5 acres of park lands</li> <li>➤ Acreage TBD</li> </ul>	<p>facility; Hagerstown's first skatepark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Creation of 2-3 mile multi-use trail system and new park access on undeveloped County parkland at Regional Park</li> <li>➤ Study feasibility of creating loop trail system connecting High Rock, Pen Mar Park and Fort Ritchie</li> </ul>
<p><b>Greenways/Rail Trails/Water Trails</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Antietam Creek</li> <li>➤ Conococheague Creek</li> <li>➤ Weverton to Roxbury Corridor</li> <li>➤ Antietam Creek Greenway Trail</li> <li>➤ Proximity analysis shows majority of County (outside of mountainous areas) located less than 3 miles from water access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Antietam Drive and Security Road acquisitions totaling 3.1 acres for Antietam Creek Water Trail</li> <li>➤ Additional acquisitions or improvements planned for Antietam Water Trail at Devil's Backbone Park, Keedysville Road, Roxbury Road and Shepherdstown Pike</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue Development of Antietam Creek Water Trail including property acquisition, public access improvements, and installing new boat access</li> <li>➤ Initial design and construction of Conococheague Water Trail</li> <li>➤ Study feasibility of pilot segment of Civil War Rail Trail where locally supported</li> <li>➤ Identify priority lands to be connected for protection and/or recreational trail development as part of ongoing Comprehensive Plan Update</li> </ul>
<p><b>Joint Use of School Facilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Countywide</li> </ul>	<p>NA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue partnering with</li> </ul>



			BOE to oversize gymnasiums as part of new school construction.
<b>Bicycling and Pedestrian Safety and Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Primarily Urban and Town Growth Areas</li> </ul>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Implement recommendations in City of Hagerstown’s Bicycle Master Plan, HEPMPO Regional Bicycle Plan</li> <li>➤ Upgrade and/or install new sidewalks in high priority locations such as around schools using Safe Routes to Schools and other grant funding</li> </ul>
<b>Community Recreation Centers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Urban Growth Area</li> </ul>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Support local efforts to pursue an indoor turf facility at the Municipal Stadium Site</li> <li>➤ Coordinate with local partners to maximize use of existing community centers</li> <li>➤ Study feasibility of either expanding the Senior Center or providing additional programming for this demographic at existing facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Participation Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NA</li> </ul>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Pursue alternate methods of distribution to</li> </ul>



			reach groups less represented in current survey
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iv. 2022 LPPRP Recommendations

Parkland Acquisition

- Continue to pursue acquisition of additional parkland for active and passive recreational activities. Specifically, park proximity and equity analyses show potential areas for additional service near:
  - ◆ The northern portion of the Urban Growth Area from roughly Maugansville to Leitersburg and points north
  - ◆ Sharpsburg Pike corridor from I-70 south to Lappans Road
  - ◆ Jefferson Boulevard/Robinwood Drive
  - ◆ Cascade/Pen Mar/Ft. Ritchie (taking advantage of redevelopment in the area)
  - ◆ Within the City of Hagerstown, particularly in or immediately around downtown
- Continue to develop strategies to acquire additional land and/or financial support for park acquisition and development during the development review process. Strategies could include amendments to the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, land dedication during development review, incentives for land donation, land swaps, and/or impact fees.
- Utilize available spatial analysis tools and informational resources to ensure park lands are distributed equitably throughout the County, are adequately served by public infrastructure, meet the needs of all intended user groups and located to serve anticipated population growth and development.
- Evaluate existing governmental properties, brownfield sites and other underutilized lands for potential adaptive reuse that could be used for recreational purposes. Reuse of closed landfills, reclaimed mining lands and public or private lands with limited development potential (i.e. – floodplain areas) offer examples of properties that could continue providing benefits to local residents despite existing constraints.
- Encourage or incentivize innovative site design that includes functional open space to serve residents of private developments. Though these recreational amenities do not officially count towards the County’s park land inventory in the LPPRP, they help relieve the burden on public recreation facilities and serve residents where they live. Cluster subdivisions and open space requirements in new mixed use zoning districts which unlock greater permitted densities are examples of current incentives. A reduction in parking requirements at commercial or employment uses in mixed use developments could allow more room for open space during site planning.
- Maximize the impact of outside funding streams such as Project Open Space allocations and pursue competitive grants to leverage local spending on park land acquisition.



### Greenways/Rail Trails/Water Trails

- Evaluate the potential to link priority lands identified in the Comprehensive Plan for conservation and recreational purposes. Priority lands with fewer highly sensitive environmental resources should be targeted for public access through the development of recreational trails and other amenities. Utilize diverse strategies to provide public access to these including property acquisition, access easements, land swaps, and more.
- Continue to work with local landowners possessing waterway frontage to create additional public access along the Antietam and Conococheague Creeks in service of creating comprehensive water trails through the County.
- Examine the feasibility of partnering with the State in developing a pilot segment of the Civil War Rail Trail between Weverton and Roxbury along the abandoned rail line. The targeted pilot segment would need to be cost effective, have a clear title, be locally supported in the surrounding neighborhood and facilitate a high rate of public usage. Since the corridor is owned by the State of Maryland and there are access issues from neighboring properties to resolve, the County's role would be that of a supporting partner in this effort as it doesn't have the resources to construct and maintain such a facility on its own. Clearing up competing claims of ownership would be an important first step to be taken prior to conducting a pilot project feasibility study.

### Joint Use of School Facilities

Coordinating recreation and education activities at schools is an important part of the facilities plan. Utilizing the buildings and surrounding grounds as joint school-recreation centers provides indoor and outdoor facilities for neighborhood activities and interaction, and allows the center to serve as a focal point for education, recreation and related activities for the surrounding community or town. This multiple use concept is strongly endorsed in the Comprehensive Plan for the County and is consistent with several State Visions. Recommendations to improve upon this practice include:

- Continue to execute joint use agreements between the Board of Education and the Parks and Recreation Department regarding tennis courts and track use and maintenance and utilize a School Facility Use Agreement to help coordinate use of buildings and scheduling of fields on school property.
- Design of new schools should include availability of services, such as restrooms and water fountains, to the participants and spectators. This includes access to these facilities for indoor and outdoor recreation programs. Security measures to restrict access of off-hour participants to the rest of the facility should also be a priority in design.
- Continue to coordinate with the Board of Education, where appropriate, on oversizing of gymnasiums to provide regulation size courts for various indoor sports such as volleyball and basketball. This has proven to be a practical and cost-effective method for helping to meet the needs of recreational demands.



## Bicycling and Pedestrian Safety and Health

Washington County has an excellent road network, historic towns, points of interest, and a scenic, pastoral landscape which attracts recreational bicyclists locally, and from nearby states and metropolitan areas. The C & O Canal towpath and the Western MD Rail Trail are additional tourist attractions that make the County a well-known destination for bicycle tourists. In addition, the City of Hagerstown has implemented an aggressive Bicycle Master Plan that has garnered them a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community designation by the League of American Bicyclist. To improve upon our bicycle and pedestrian facilities the following recommendations are offered:

- Ensure that all transportation modes are routinely considered in the creation of new or retrofitted transportation facilities in service of creating a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system in Washington County. Incorporate Complete Streets principles into roadway designs where technically and fiscally feasible, particularly in planned growth areas.
- Consider access to multi-modal transportation options as well as proximity to higher density housing in the site selection process for new community facilities in planned growth areas to maximize return on investments in public infrastructure and promote efficient patterns of land use.
- Target intersections and other roadway segments experiencing high numbers of accidents for traffic calming measures and improved safety features for bicycle and pedestrian users.
- Where adequate right of way space exists, target road resurfacing projects for the creation of new on-road bicycle lanes to facilitate routine expansion of the bicycle network in a cost-effective manner.
- Continue to work with the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization to implement the recommendations of their recently approved Regional Bicycle Plan.
- Continue to seek funding opportunities through grant programs such as the Transportation Alternatives Program, Safe Routes to School Program, Federal Lands Access Program, etc.
- Coordinate among school, health, planning, and engineering officials, as well as community betterment groups, to contribute to the awareness of the many benefits of improving facilities and access to these facilities thereby increasing opportunities for bicycling and walking.
- Develop programs and strategies to increase bicycling and pedestrian activity through Encouragement, Education, Enforcement, and Evaluation mechanisms in addition to Engineering improvements (The 5 E's Model). The "Bicycle Friendly" certification





achieved by Hagerstown offers a ready-made model for communities as well as businesses.

- Work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to promote local biking events and County bicycle facilities. Post signs marking bicycle routes identified on the Bicycle Tours brochure distributed by the CVB for wayfinding and to increase their usage by residents and visitors.

### Community Recreation Centers

- Support City redevelopment efforts to create indoor recreation space such as at Municipal Stadium
- Evaluate the capacity of existing indoor recreation facilities in the County and prioritize renovations and conversions of these facilities to provide additional indoor recreational space for the community.
- Pursue public-private partnerships to spur development of new multi-use indoor recreational facilities to meet local demand for activity spaces that cannot be accommodated by existing facilities.
- Pursue "sharing" or "host" operation and/or maintenance agreements with special interest groups, leagues, and other organizations to equitably distribute operational costs among user groups.
- Provide central coordination and direction of organized recreational programs to avoid duplication of services and facilitate the common use of all available resources.
- Work with community partners to continue pursuing opportunities to expand recreation programs and services to seniors. Evaluate the feasibility of expanding current Senior Center or look for other locations where available facilities may help meet rising demand.

### Participation Survey

- The reimagined public survey was largely successful in soliciting feedback that directly informed the usage and participation metrics required by State guidelines for parks and recreation. Aside from revisiting the phrasing of questions, additional methods of distribution should be considered to flesh out community feedback. These may include methods such as posting signs or notices at public parks and recreation facilities encouraging survey participation, or providing a QR code that links visitors directly to the survey from their phone. Special attention should be made to target community facilities that serve demographic groups that were underrepresented among 2022 survey respondents for distribution of notices about taking the survey.



### III. Other Protected Lands

#### A. Natural Resource Land Conservation Overview

Washington County is blessed with an abundant and varied collection of natural resources. Bounded on the east and west by portions of the Appalachian Mountain chain, scenic vistas are plentiful. Fairview and Sideling Hill Mountains to the west and South Mountain to the east provide important hardwood forests, animal habitats and opportunities for recreation. The fertile soils of the Great Hagerstown Valley provide high quality productive soils for agricultural uses.



Photo 6: Wilson Bridge spanning Conococheague Creek

The valley also contains two primary stream systems: Conococheague and Antietam Creeks. These streams are used for public water supply, agricultural irrigation, and recreational uses.

The Potomac River bounds the County on its southern border. With one of the longest areas of shoreline along the Potomac, Washington County citizens have ample access to recreational water activities. It is also the primary water source for the City of Hagerstown and surrounding urbanized areas.

Conservation of natural resources is a high priority and integral part of the County's long-term land use goals. Natural resource conservation efforts have primarily succeeded through the comprehensive planning process and subsequent changes in zoning/subdivision regulations. County planning staff works to keep long range and resource planning issues on the radar of the various local boards and commissions while continuing to review development and subdivision plans for their impacts on sensitive environmental resources. A variety of public agencies aid property owners who wish to voluntarily manage, conserve and restore natural resources on their property. State and Federal programs are the primary means of large scale natural resource protection in Washington County, particularly in the establishment of permanent easements that achieve various conservation goals.

A wide range of forest land, streams and rivers are well preserved by many different entities within Washington County. The nearly 40,000 acres of park lands mentioned in the Parks and Recreation section of the LPPRP, such as those owned by the National Park Service and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources or Maryland Park Service serve a dual mission of providing for public recreational access in some areas, while limiting it in others to leave the habitat of sensitive flora and fauna undisturbed.

The County is fortunate to have many of these park lands linked together by long-distance trails, many of which are of national significance. Trails such as the C&O Canal Towpath, Appalachian Trail and Western Maryland Rail Trail provide opportunities to travel hundreds of miles on foot or by bicycle between numerous State and Federal park lands, as well as many gateway communities, without ever setting foot in an automobile.



In addition to public park lands, Washington County actively participates in a host of land preservation programs originating at the Federal, State and Local levels of government. The specific purpose of the permanent easements which are established under these programs varies. Some easement programs have more of a land conservation focus and seek to exclude or limit development in areas where sensitive natural resources occur. Others are more concerned with preserving the agricultural use of the property in perpetuity to support the continued viability of the industry and to act as a tool for the management of population growth across the landscape. Still others look to achieve both of these goals through regulations that support the varied land use and land cover types occurring on a given property. Given the overlapping focus of some of these land conservation or preservation programs, some appear and are described in both the Natural Resource Land Conservation and Agricultural Land Preservation sections of the LPPRP.

## **B. Goals for Natural Resource Land Conservation**

### **i. General context**

There are myriad tangible and intangible benefits associated with natural resource land conservation. The Parks and Recreation section of the LPPRP details the remarkable abundance of facilities that exist for the general public to access passive and active recreational opportunities in Washington County. Visitors have access to lands ranging from neighborhood parks of a few acres or less in size, all the way to federal park lands spanning tens of thousands of acres.

A visitor pursuing various forms of active recreation at these lands is able to realize individual benefits, such as improved physical fitness and the relief of stress which supports his or her mental health. These individual benefits, in turn, positively affect the larger community as overall public health is improved and community cohesion is strengthened through the mixing of people from various social classes. Additionally, in visiting the locations where these park lands are found, tourism dollars flow into local communities, benefiting both merchants individually and the vitality of the supporting community overall.

These tangible benefits are well understood by users of the County's overall system of preserved lands. Less recognized are the intangible benefits that come from conserving vital natural resources for the benefit of future generations. County investments to protect or restore forested stream buffers along Antietam Creek, for example, provide benefits that range from the protection of wildlife habitat to the improvement of water quality for users locally, as well as downstream. Thus, while someone paddling the Antietam Creek Water Trail or turning on their faucet may not make the connection between a targeted program to enhance stream buffers and the quality of the resource they are enjoying, they are still a recipient of both tangible and intangible benefits as a result of the County's efforts.

### **County Goals for Natural Resources Land Conservation**

Conservation of natural resources is supported throughout the County's Comprehensive Plan. Goal #3, Chapter 2 reads: "Encourage the stewardship of the environment and the County's heritage." The Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan advances the following policies in relation to this goal:

- Balance future growth with the need to preserve the historical, cultural, and scenic beauty of the county for future generations.



- Support the compatibility of the built and natural environments by promoting context sensitive development.
- Strive to achieve complementary goals of natural resource protection and agricultural land preservation in the expenditure of locally controlled funds where these resources overlap.
- Limit the amount of development in sensitive areas through the identification of priority resources during development review and permitting processes.
- Safeguard the unique environmental character of designated special planning areas through regulatory review and comprehensive land use planning.
- Utilize existing regulatory tools and dedicated funds affiliated with the forest conservation program to preserve or create contiguous forest cover in places where canopy coverage will achieve significant environmental benefits.
- Encourage sustainable forest management practices on private forest resource lands to promote long term forest health in actively managed woodlands.
- Protect surface and ground water quality through storm water management, on lot sewage disposal, and wellhead protection regulations.
- Pursue alternatives to landfill disposal, whenever feasible, in accordance with policies advanced in the County's Solid Waste Management and Recycling Plan to safeguard rural resource lands.



**Photo 7: View of Hagerstown Valley from High Rock**

These goals represent key policies which support the conservation of natural resource lands in Washington County so that future generations will be able to continue to connect to the County's rural heritage in an increasingly urbanized world. New protected lands preserved or acquired under various easement programs are detailed in this section as well as the Agricultural Land Preservation section of the LPPRP. The enforcement of current county land use and zoning ordinances and their related codes has continued to support these goals in those instances where development has been proposed in natural resource areas.

## **ii. Implementation of Previous Plan Goals**

Goals outlined in the previous LPPRP revolved largely around the general goals established with the Comprehensive Plan. One of the primary goals of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan is to "Encourage the stewardship of the environment and the County's heritage." As part of this goal, there are nine objectives listed to assist in achieving this overall goal. They range from limiting and balancing new growth with environmental concerns to encouraging recycling and resource conservation. The in-progress update of the County's Comprehensive Plan retains and expands upon many of these policies.



Comprehensive Plan policies are also reinforced and expanded upon in a host of functional plans. Some functional plans, such as the County's Solid Waste Management and Recycling Plan or Water and Sewer Plan, establish policies and recommendations that directly inform past and current LPPRP goals as well. The County completed a ten-year update of its Solid Waste Management and Recycling Plan in 2021.

Goals and policies established in long range land use plans are ultimately carried out through the enforcement of various regulatory ordinances and participation in programs. The County's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, Forest Conservation Ordinance, Floodplain Management Ordinance and Stormwater Management, Grading, Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance are among the key regulatory tools used daily to achieve the goals set forth in the Natural Resource Land Conservation section of the LPPRP. Greater detail about these Ordinances and the successes achieved in enforcing them is provided near the end of this section.

### State Goals for Natural Resources Land Conservation

Identify, protect, and restore lands and waterways in Maryland that support 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;
  - Support 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.

### C. Inventory of Protected Natural Resource Lands and Mapping

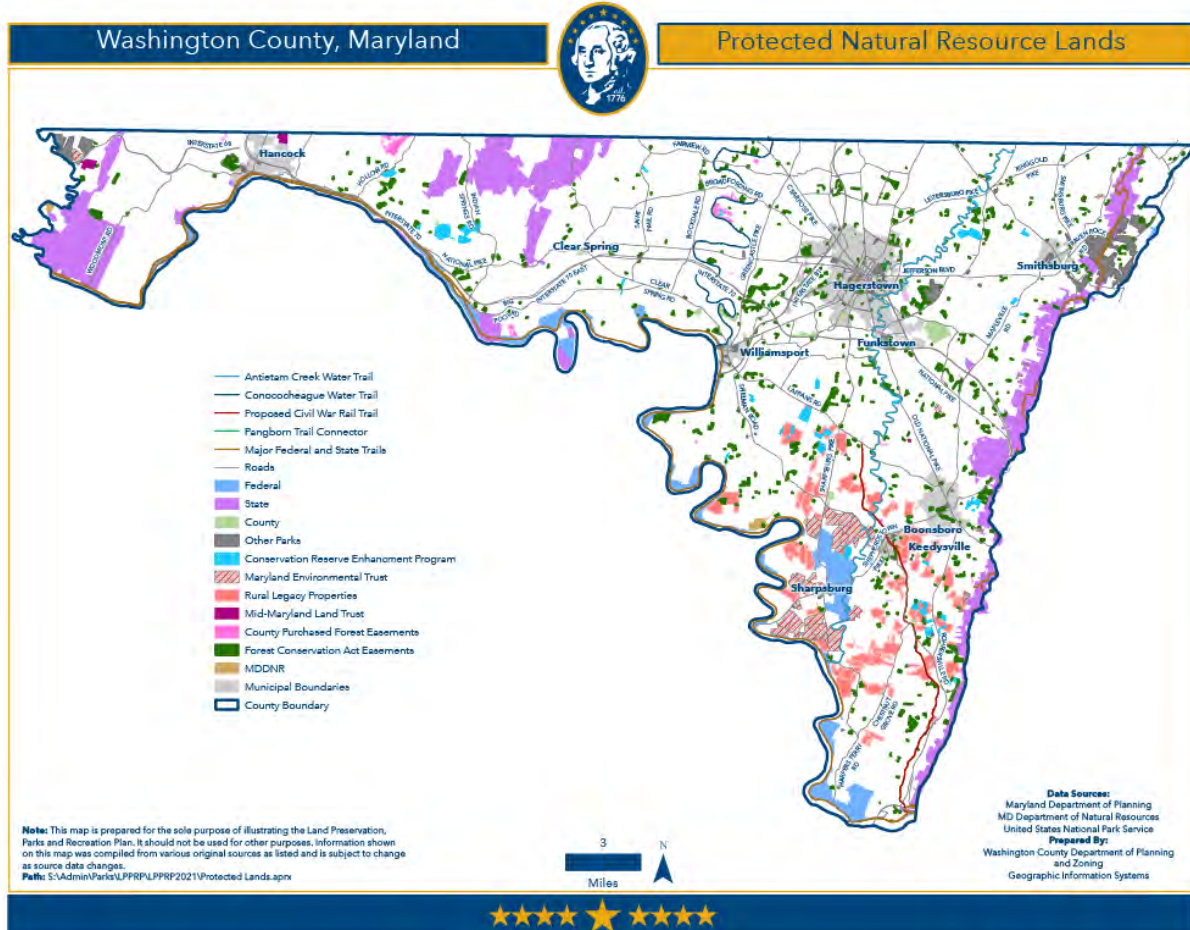
Washington County has a mixture of areas that are protected for Natural Resource Conservation. Much of the land under protection is governmentally (State and Federal) owned land. There are currently four National Parks located within Washington County; Antietam National Battlefield, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, Harper's Ferry (Maryland Heights), and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. While each of these parks serves to protect more historical and cultural resources, the mere protection of the land serves to also protect the environment around them.



Photo 8: Dunkard Church at Antietam Battlefield

The same can be said for the Maryland State Park system. While most of the State Parks have been established to provide recreational opportunities for the citizens, they also serve to protect the environment as well. While most of the state parks have been established to provide recreational opportunities, there are several that have been established to provide environmental and habitat protection. These include Natural Resources Management Areas (NRMA), Fishery Management Areas (FMA), and Wildlife Management Areas (WMA).

Sprinkled around the County are other protected lands such as scenic, historic, or environmental easements. These easements vary widely in their purpose and can be established through both governmental and private, non-profit organizations. Examples of these types of easements are shown on Map 10 and described briefly below. A spreadsheet of the County's Natural Resource Lands Inventory can be found in the Appendix.



Map 10: Protected Natural Resource Lands

➤ **Federal and State Scenic Easements**

These easements are purchased from private property owners mostly along the C&O Canal corridor, or around Antietam Battlefield, to protect the viewsheds surrounding these nationally significant parks. Scenic easements place development restrictions, mandate design standards and limit the removal of forest cover, among other provisions, to achieve the protection of nearby environmental and historic resources.

➤ **Maryland Environmental Trust Easements**

The Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) is a quasi-public organization that is both a unit of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and is governed by a private Board of Trustees. MET works with landowners, local communities, and land trusts to protect natural, agricultural, scenic, and cultural resources. More than 4,400 acres have been preserved by MET in Washington County. The majority of MET easements in Washington County surround Antietam National Battlefield.

➤ **Private and Non-Profit Organization Easements**

There are a few other private and/non-profit organizations working in Washington County to



preserve various aspects of our natural and cultural resources. Some examples include Save Historic Antietam Foundation, Mid-Maryland Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and the Conservation Fund.

➤ **Forest Conservation Act Easements**

Also included within the category of easements are those related to the State Forest Conservation Act (FCA). The FCA was implemented by the Maryland General Assembly to reduce the impacts of development on the statewide forest resources. Most new development requires a standard review of onsite forest resources as well as other sensitive environmental resources. Frequently, a permanent forest easement is established on or off the development site to offset the impacts on forest resources. There are more than 3,600 acres of forest conservation easements in Washington County.

➤ **County Purchased Forest Easements**

Developments that must comply with the FCA but cannot feasibly meet forest mitigation requirements on or off the development site may pay into the County's Forest Conservation Fund. Accrued funds in this account are then spent to establish permanent forest easements on private lands from willing landowners. The program is administered by the Washington County Soil Conservation District (WCSCD). WCSCD's priority ranking system targets the protection or establishment of contiguous forest, particularly that along major waterways such as the Antietam and Conococheague Creeks, to achieve water quality and habitat conservation objectives.

➤ **Agricultural and Natural Resource Land Preservation Programs**

Some programs administered under the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program work to achieve the protection of both agricultural lands as well as natural resources. Two of the most significant are the Rural Legacy Program (RLP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

➤ [Rural Legacy Program](#)

The RLP provides funding to preserve large, contiguous tracts of land and to enhance natural resources, agricultural, forestry and environmental protection while supporting a sustainable land base for natural resource based industries. The program encourages local governments and private land trusts to identify Rural Legacy Areas (geographic areas around historically significant portions of the County) and to competitively apply for funds to complement existing land preservation efforts or to develop new ones. Easements or fee estate purchases are sought from willing landowners in order to protect areas vulnerable to sprawl development that can weaken an area's natural resources, thereby jeopardizing the economic value of farming, forestry, recreation and tourism. The Rural Legacy Program in Washington County has permanently protected over 7,500 acres.

➤ [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#)

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded program that contracts with landowners so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. The CREP program has been initiated in



Maryland primarily to improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. This is accomplished by installing vegetative buffers along streams, waterways, and areas with highly erodible soil on lands throughout the State. These buffers serve as a natural barrier to prevent sediment, phosphorus and other pollutants from entering both County and State waterways. Nearly 1,700 acres are protected under the CREP program.

## **D. Implementing Ordinances and Programs**

The County strives to preserve its natural beauty and rural character through the conservation of natural resources and enhancement of recreational opportunities. This goal is implemented through continuous long-term land use policies that are designed to guide growth and development into planned growth areas which, in turn, help to preserve the rural character of our County by concentrating growth where it is desired. Easements and fee simple purchases of nature resource land have been the main strategies of the programs previously described to achieve permanent preservation of the County's rural character. The effectiveness of these land preservation programs to achieve short and long-term goals for land use is, however, predicated on the enforcement of numerous regulatory ordinances, completing frequent updates to functional plans, and active participation in a variety resource based programs. A brief description of these ordinances, plans and programs are outlined below.

### **i. Comprehensive Plan**

The primary purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide growth in a given location towards an efficient pattern of land use that provides, while simultaneously ensuring, protection of valued community resources. Land development patterns in Washington County have been guided by an overarching policy of directing growth into designated areas where infrastructure and resources are already in place to support new development. Where infrastructure and services to support growth are not readily available, particularly in rural areas of the County, land preservation and natural resource conservation efforts are undertaken to preserve the County's natural and cultural heritage.

#### **➤ Land Use Plan**

The Land Use Plan, shown in Map 11 below, is the central element of the Comprehensive Plan. It translates short and long range land use policies established elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, into a document that projects and guides future land use towards a desired vision for overall community character. Land Use Plan designations within established growth areas tend to promote higher residential densities and locations where commercial and industrial areas can be established. Washington County has established a defined Urban Growth Area surrounding the City of Hagerstown and the Towns of Williamsport and Funkstown. There are also smaller Town Growth Areas established around the Towns of Smithsburg, Hancock, Clear Spring, and Boonsboro. Limited development, mostly to support existing communities and maintain adequate public infrastructure for health and safety considerations, also occurs in unincorporated Rural Villages.

To further support and encourage development to occur within designated growth areas, the Comprehensive Plan also specifically calls out the Rural Areas of the County as resource areas that should be preserved and protected. This is accomplished with policies and recommendations to limit new residential development in these areas and promote open space through various land preservation programs. Rural land use policy areas delineated in the Comprehensive Plan include:



➤ [Agriculture](#)

The Agriculture land use policy area is primarily associated with sections of the County in the Great Hagerstown Valley. It extends around most of the UGA and south to Boonsboro. Another area of the County with the Agriculture land use policy area is from Conococheague Creek west to the foot of Fairview Mountain. The Agriculture policy area has been purposely drawn to enclose large blocks of the best soils for intensive agricultural production. Most of the operating farms as well as the largest block of farmland preserved through various land preservation programs are in this area.

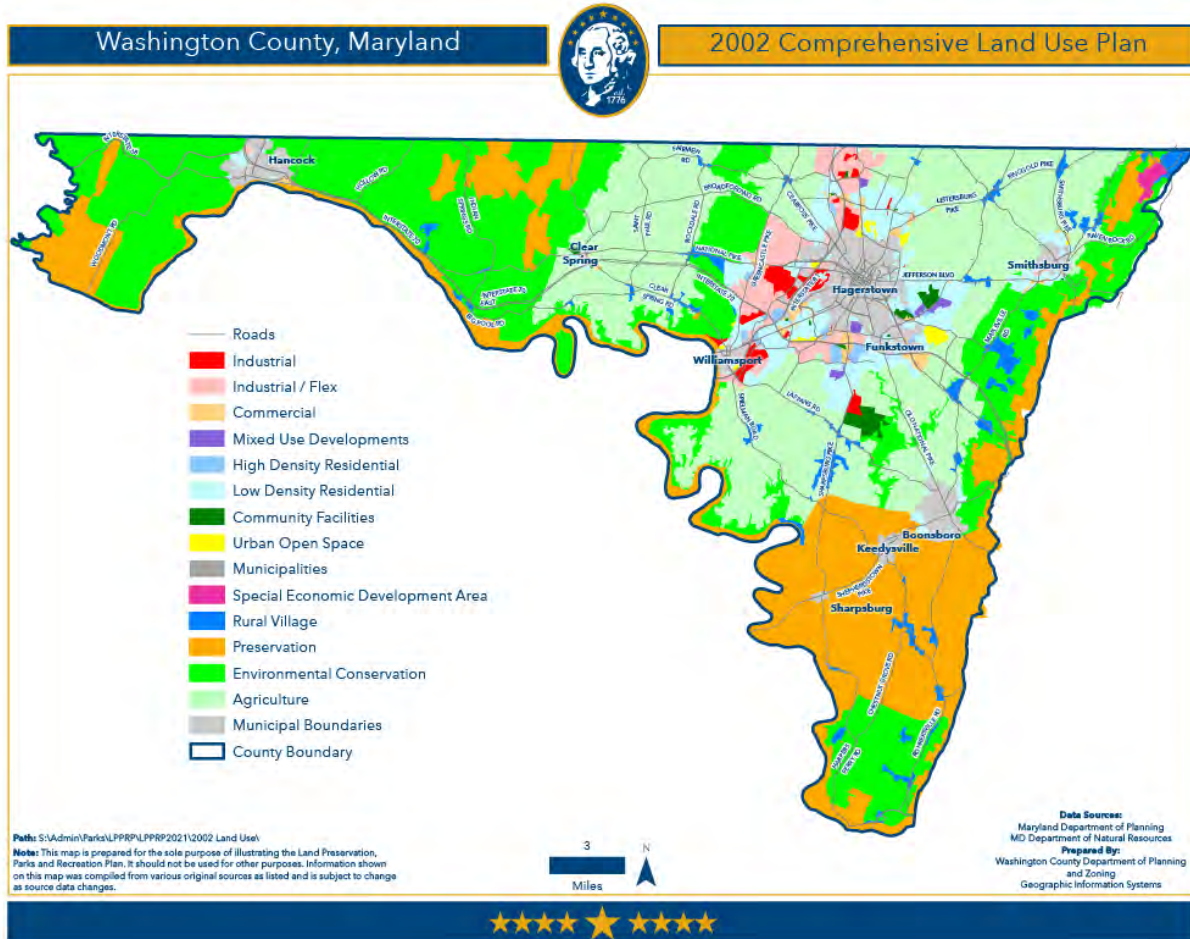
➤ [Environmental Conservation](#)

The Environmental Conservation policy area is associated with locations in the County where environmental sensitivity issues are prominent enough to warrant constraints on development. It includes steep slopes and forested areas on mountainsides as well as the steep slopes, floodplains, and forested areas along the Potomac River, lower Antietam Creek, Conococheague Creek and Beaver Creek.

➤ [Preservation](#)

The Preservation policy area was designated to become the foundation for land preservation efforts in the Rural Area. This policy area includes the County designated Rural Legacy Area, Federal lands, State parks, State wildlife management areas, and County parks. This area is designated to have the most restrictive limitation on development in the Rural Area to support preservation efforts in these areas.





➤ **Comprehensive Rezoning of the Rural Area**

Recommendations made in the County’s 2002 Comprehensive Plan ultimately led to a comprehensive rezoning of the rural areas of Washington County in 2005. This comprehensive rezoning ultimately resulted in a significant decrease in the permitted density of residential development throughout the rural area, positively impacting the protection of environmental throughout much of the County to the present day. Strong linkages were made between the policies established in the Environmental Conservation and Preservation land use policy areas previously described, and the zoning which was subsequently applied to properties that fell within those policy areas. Present zoning in these two zoning districts, which cover significant portions of the County’s rural area, limit residential development to one dwelling unit per 20 acres for Environmental Conservation Districts, and one dwelling unit per 30 acres for properties falling within a Preservation Zoning District.

**ii. Forest Resource Management Programs**

In 1991 the State passed the Maryland Forest Conservation Act. The intent of the law is to minimize the loss of forest land from development and ensure that priority areas for forest locations are identified and protected prior to development. After passage of the law, the County drafted and adopted the Forest Conservation Ordinance to provide local regulatory support to the Act. Implementation of the Forest Conservation Ordinance serves a dual purpose in that it protects valuable forest resources for



future generations and it encourages the retention or creation of forest resources in sensitive areas where it is also valuable to the overall ecosystem.

According to the 15-year Forest Conservation Act Review, the State overall has been successful in limiting clearing of forest resources. Nearly all Counties subject to the law, including Washington County, have been able to retain 65% of forest resources made susceptible to clearing by development. Washington County specifically has retained nearly 2,000 acres of forest since the inception of the Act in 1993.<sup>7</sup> Challenges remain however in striking a balance between development and forest canopy retention within planned growth areas where development activity is most intense.

In addition, as noted previously, the County has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Washington County Soil Conservation District (SCD) to create additional forest easements on private lands using funds collected from developers who cannot meet their forest mitigation requirements through other means. Easement purchases of existing forest or the planting of new forest is focused on priority lands such as those along streams, on steep slopes, containing sensitive wildlife habitat or those conferring other significant environmental benefits. The SCD locates willing landowners, then manages the various stages of forest establishment and monitoring for 20 years after the success of the initial planting is achieved. The County maintains a dedicated Forest Conservation Fund where accrued funds paid by developers are tapped to implement these projects.

#### ➤ Antietam Overlay Zoning District

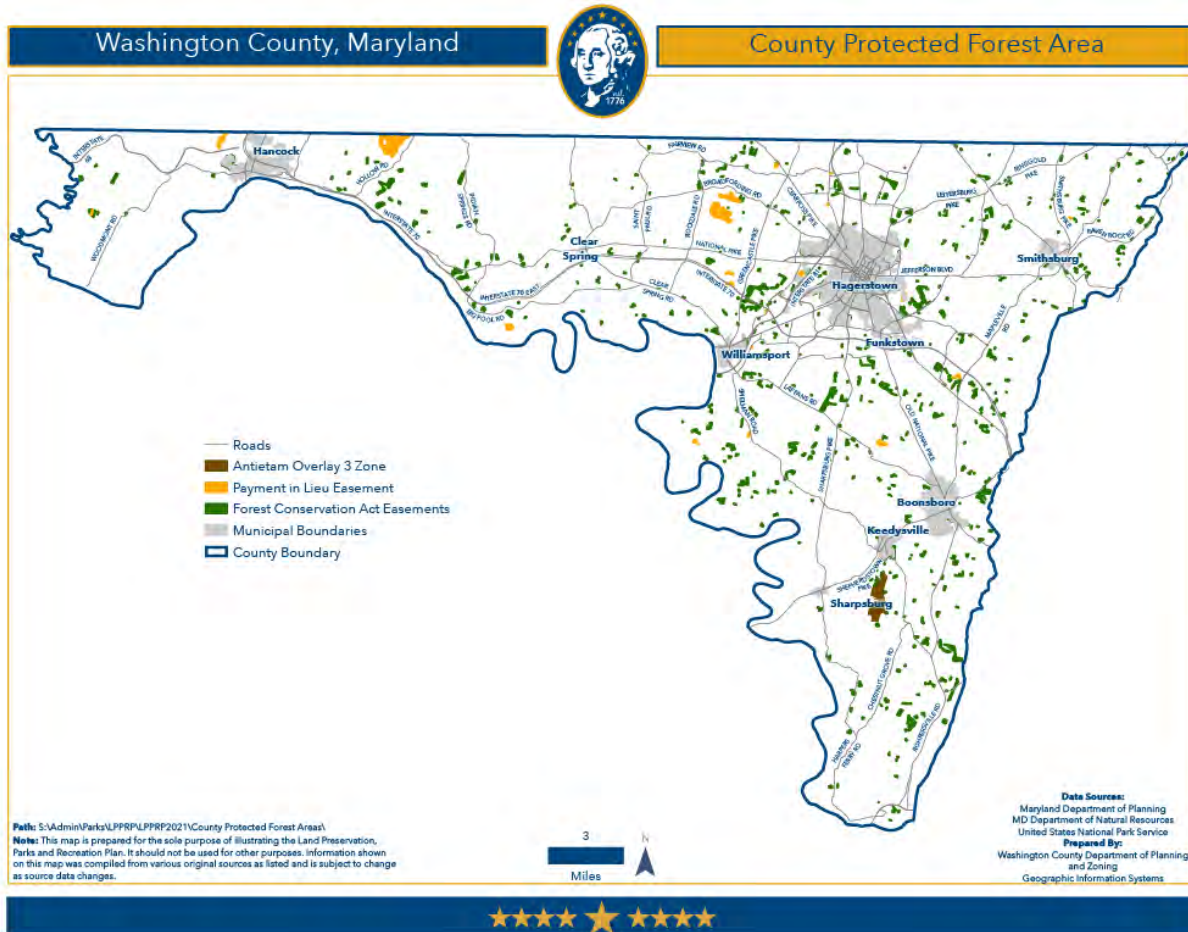
The purpose of the Antietam Overlay District is to provide mechanisms for the protection of significant historic structures and land areas by requiring development and land subdivision to occur in a manner that 1) preserves the existing quality of the viewshed of the Antietam Battlefield, and 2) ensures that development of certain lands adjacent to the major roads which provide public access to the Antietam Battlefield is compatible with the agricultural and historic character of the area. The overlay adds additional land use controls to base zoning regulations which apply to properties that locate in the vicinity of the Battlefield.

The AO-3 Red Hill Area subsection of this zoning district, in particular, places strict limitations on tree cutting activities for properties located southeast of the Battlefield and the Town of Sharpsburg, mostly along Red Hill Road and Porterstown Road. During site development, minimum tree cutting is permitted to allow construction of an access and driveway, related parking areas, a dwelling, related accessory structures and required septic disposal systems. Additional tree cutting on the site during development is only permitted within 35' of the dwelling and related accessory structures. Thus, properties developed in the AO-3 District under current regulations may have onsite forested areas protected both by a permanent forest easement due to Forest Conservation Act regulations while the remaining woodlands are given de facto protection by zoning requirements.

Forest Conservation Act Easements, County-purchased forest easements, and the AO-3 Zoning District are shown on Map 12 below.

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<sup>7</sup> Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Forest Service, "15-year FCA review".



Map 12: County Protected Forest Areas

### iii. Watershed Management Programs

Washington County lies entirely within the Potomac River Watershed. The Potomac River is one of three major watershed basins that drain into the Chesapeake Bay.

One of the primary goals of any government is to provide a safe water supply. Since 1983 the Chesapeake Bay Partnership (CBP) has used written agreements to guide the restoration of the Bay and its watershed. These agreements have been revised from time to time to revise or include goals that are in line with the best available technology and advancements in science. The latest reaffirmation of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement in 2014 has provided the impetus for the State, in partnership with the Counties and incorporated municipalities, to develop long term plans for watershed protection and water quality improvements.

The County's first major foray into watershed management began in 1992. A targeted watershed management project was initiated by the Washington County Soil Conservation District for the Little Antietam Creek and Marsh Run sub-watersheds. The area was expanded in 1996 to include the Beaver Creek watershed. A Soil Conservation Planner was hired to complete a watershed assessment and to begin educational efforts in the targeted sub-watersheds. This was funded by an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Nonpoint source grant from Section 319 of the Clean Water Act and was obtained through the MD Department of Agriculture. A conservation technician was hired to help install best



management practices (BMP) identified by the planner in Soil and Water Conservation Programs. This program has continued in the Beaver Creek and Marsh Run sub-watersheds. Recent stream restoration projects have occurred in Antietam Creek, Black Rock Run and additional stretches of Beaver Creek. A comprehensive Watershed Restoration Plan was developed for Antietam Creek in 2012 in a cooperative effort between numerous Federal, State and Local entities.

➤ [Water Quality and Stormwater Management](#)

Since the 2017 LPPRP, Federal, State and local jurisdictions have continued working together to develop and implement Phase III of Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). A deadline of 2025 has been established to meet pollution reduction goals for the Chesapeake Bay. The principal focus of the Phase III WIP in Maryland is to reduce nitrogen loads entering the Bay, because Maryland is on track to meet its 2025 targets for other pollutants such as phosphorus and sediment.



**Photo 9: Clean County Initiative Street Sweeper**

Washington County's Clean County Initiative represents a multi-faceted effort to address water quality, stormwater management, and overall environmental quality in urban and rural areas. The County budgets for stormwater retrofits, stream restorations, street sweeping and tree plantings. Educational information on septic system stewardship, rain barrels, pet waste cleanup and recycling are also distributed to the public. The County also works with partner organizations such as the Board of Education and the Antietam Watershed

Alliance to engage the public in volunteer opportunities for stream cleanups and tree plantings. A full-time Watershed Specialist was hired to assist the Stormwater Management Coordinator within the Division of Environmental Management to catalyze County implementation efforts toward meeting compliance with Federal and State water quality standards.

Land Use management is another key focus area related to the County's watershed management efforts. In 2010, the County adopted the Stormwater Management, Grading, Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance. This new ordinance adopted stormwater management guidelines in accordance with State law to require the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) of environmental site design (ESD) to the maximum extent practicable (MEP). The implementation of this Ordinance has helped reduce the negative impacts of land development on water resources and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of streams in the County.

#### **iv. Sensitive Areas Element**

The issue of sensitive areas and their importance is not a new topic to the County. Since the first Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1971, the County has targeted these areas for their importance in environmental health and natural benefits. Sensitive areas were formalized and defined as part of the Planning Act of 1992. Included in the definition of a sensitive area are streams and their buffers, 100-year floodplains, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes.





➤ [Special Planning Areas](#)

Also, as part of the Planning Act, local jurisdictions were permitted and encouraged to identify additional sensitive areas that may be unique and locally important. The Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1981 had already brought attention to several unique areas in the County that were worthy of additional consideration to limit the impacts of development in these areas. These areas included the Smithsburg/Edgemont Watershed, the Beaver Creek Watershed, and the Appalachian Trail corridor. In 1996, the County formally adopted amendments to the Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances giving special consideration to the effects of development on these unique areas. Other special planning areas may be added as part of the Comprehensive Plan update currently in progress.



Map 13: Special Planning Areas

➤ [Streams and Floodplains](#)

There are several regulatory Ordinances in the County that work in concert to limit the damaging effects of development on local waterways such as streams and floodplains. These ordinances include the Subdivision Ordinance, the Floodplain Management Ordinance and the previously discussed Stormwater Management, Grading, Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance. While the primary purpose of these Ordinances is to accomplish the protection of various environmental resources, they also serve to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the public and limit damages to individual property owners by directing development to more responsible locations.



- **Subdivision Ordinance/Zoning Ordinance**

The County Subdivision Ordinance outlines basic requirements for the location and orderly arrangement of new subdivisions as they relate to various aspects of development including environmental impacts. The Zoning Ordinance also provides a regulatory framework for new development. Both the Subdivision Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance specifically define streams and their associated buffers and floodplains as areas sensitive to the impacts of development; and, therefore, require additional mitigation efforts to reduce said impacts.

To help reduce environmental impacts, development that occurs on land that contains a perennial or intermittent stream is required to provide a dimensional buffer proportionate to about the slope immediately adjacent to the waterway. Such buffers are applied to both sides of the waterway and restrict development and land disturbance within these areas. Development is also restricted within areas located in the boundaries of the 100-year floodplain as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Installation of new septic systems and their associated drainage areas are prohibited in both stream buffers and floodplains.

- **Floodplain Management Ordinance**

The purpose of the Floodplain Management Ordinance is to protect human life and to minimize impacts on infrastructure, property, and the natural environment. By delineating flood prone areas, development can be directed away from those areas and allow for the natural movement of stream channels and other surface waters across the landscape. New construction and/or disturbance of the land within designated floodplain areas is either prohibited or severely limited. Most construction is required to be elevated to a point at or above the base flood level.

- **Habitat of Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species**

Conservation efforts for habitat protection are crucial to limiting harmful impacts on the wildlife and overall ecosystem. This is especially true for plants and animals currently listed on the Federally Threatened and Endangered Species List. There are currently three species (two plants and one animal) listed as threatened or endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington County.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Service also maintains a list of state-listed rare, threatened and endangered species habitats. The County sends development applications that may contain habitat of rare, threatened and endangered species to the Service for their review and comment. Habitat protection measures recommended by the Service are included on plans involving land disturbance and tracked by parcel in the County's permitting system. Information regarding State designated threatened and endangered species can be found on their website at the following link: [https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants\\_wildlife/rte/espaa.aspx](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/rte/espaa.aspx)

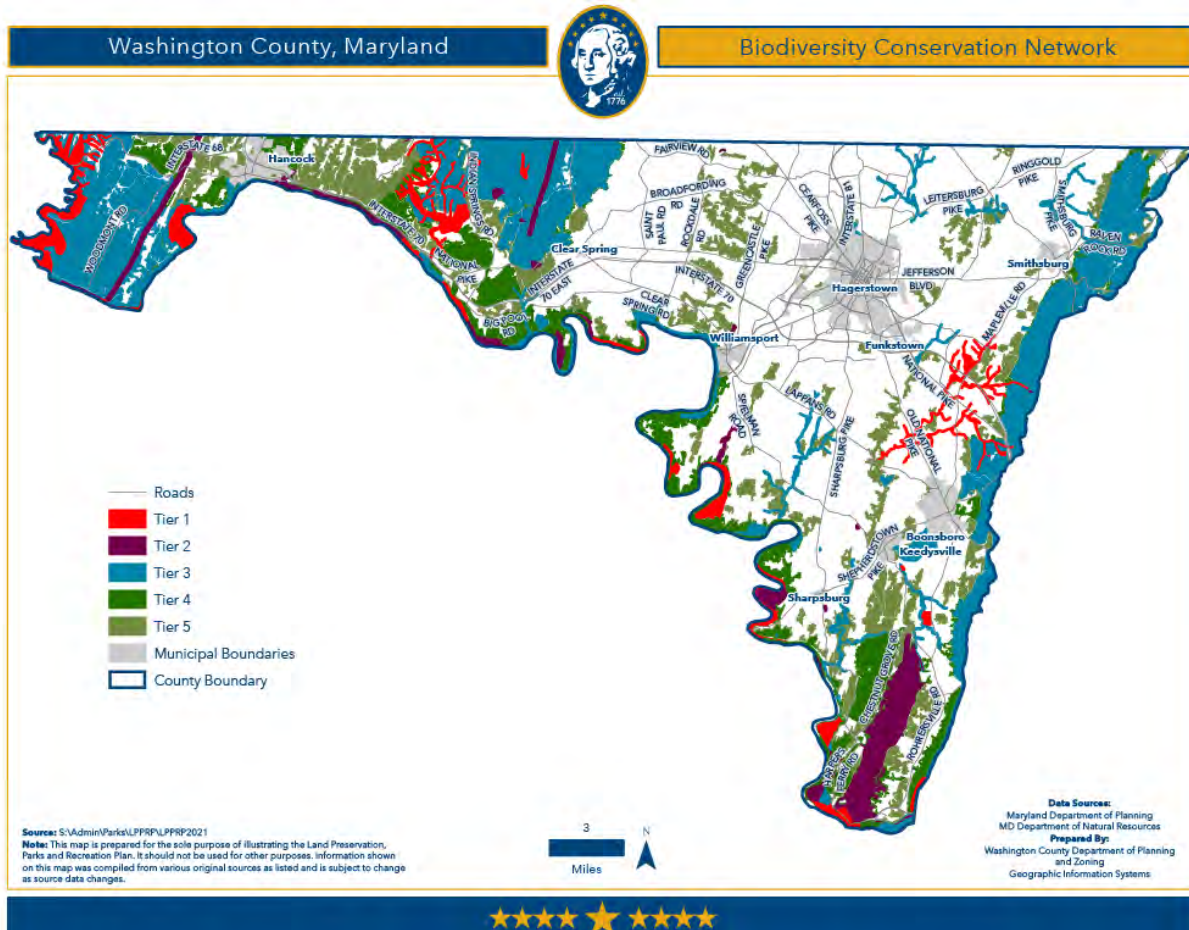
At this time, it is known that habitats of federally listed species in Washington County appear to be limited to a few rural areas in the western portion of the county where large scale or large amounts of development are not encouraged. Furthermore, large portions of the areas where these habitats exist are currently under Federal or State government ownership. State designated threatened and endangered species are sporadically scattered across the County and are also contained primarily within areas that are owned by the State or Federal government.





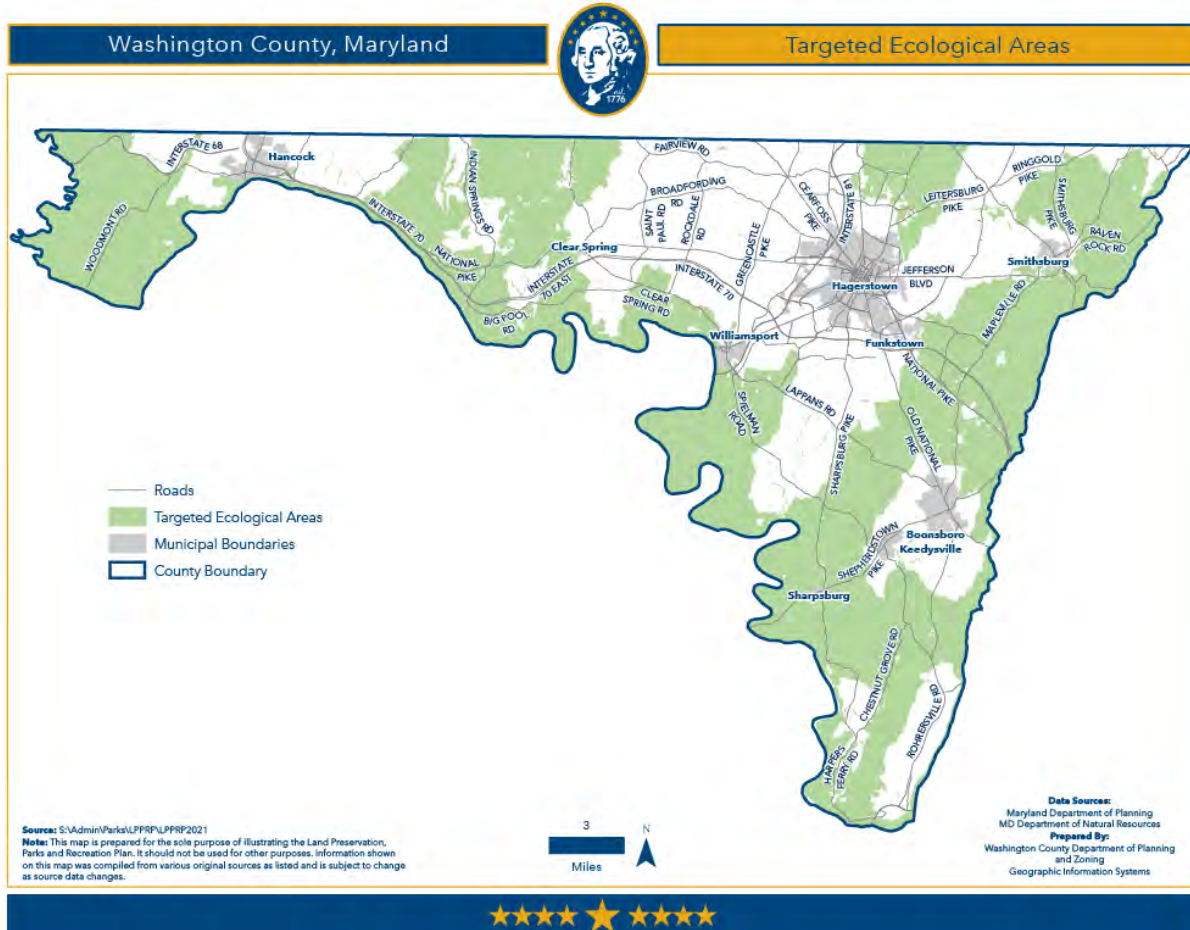
The State also has programs in place to help identify ecologically significant areas including Maryland’s Biodiversity Conservation Network (BioNet) and Targeted Ecological Areas.

- BioNet** – prioritizes areas of statewide importance for the conservation of species and natural habitat into a 5-tiered system, with Tier 1 being the most important for conservation. In Washington County, approximately 22,673 acres are classified as Tier 1 or II while about 80,795 acres are Tier III, IV or V.



Map 14: MD BioNet for Washington County, MD

- Maryland GreenPrint** – identifies areas of high ecological value, known as Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs) and promotes protection of these areas. According to MD DNR, “These areas represent the most ecologically valuable areas in the State: they are the ‘best of the best’”. The primary source of funding to protect these areas is through the Statewide Open Space program. Most of the areas designated as TEAs by the State are also located in the Environmental Conservation and Preservation land use policy areas of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. The land use policy areas mimic the State policies that these areas have ecological value and development should be limited in its volume and type.



Map 15: Targeted Ecological Areas in Washington County, MD

## E. Deficiencies and Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to support the protection of natural resource lands in Washington County:

- **Create linkages between priority natural resource lands to create a comprehensive system of protected lands that offer greater benefits than can be achieved with the protection of isolated parcels**

Though often difficult to achieve for numerous reasons, protected areas that conserve valued natural resources or ecosystems on a large scale offer significantly greater environmental benefits for wildlife as well as people than protected lands which are isolated from one another. Washington County is fortunate to already have many priority lands protected in a variety of Federal and State park lands under various designations. Many of these landscape level protected areas occur around the County's perimeter however, where the terrain is forbidding and development potential is limited. Fewer large scale natural resources lands are permanently protected within the Great Hagerstown Valley Region of the County. Where possible, the County should look to create linkages between isolated protected areas, particularly in less developable portions of this region, through the development of greenways, recreational trails, and wildlife corridors. Many of the easement programs previously described could aid



in this effort. Federal and State grants could be pursued to supplement local spending for projects that have a land conservation, climate resiliency, hazard mitigation or alternative transportation focus.

The creation of a weighted ranking system to develop a priority list of lands where multiple sensitive areas overlap to target for long term protection through various programs would be a good first step to identify where to focus protection efforts. The BioNet and GreenPrint maps previously shown offer excellent existing resources to draw from in service of this objective. Other similar resources that could be tapped include the Washington County Soil Conservation District's priority ranking system for forest easement purchases and criteria used in agricultural land preservation programs such as Rural Legacy that look to protect more than just agricultural use on the property.

➤ **Continue to pursue a multifaceted approach to enhance water quality throughout the County**

The extensive efforts undertaken by the County to address water quality through stormwater management, watershed protection, erosion and sediment controls, floodplain regulation, and agricultural and natural resource land conservation have been previously detailed. The County should look to build upon these efforts with additional supporting initiatives that address water quality through other methods. Opportunities include:

- Inventory County owned lands for their potential use to satisfy stormwater or forest conservation mitigation requirements for County development projects
- In addition to current efforts to create forested stream buffers along the Antietam and Conococheague Creeks, target use of Forest Conservation Fund spending for the protection of existing forest, or creation of new forest in the Upper Beaver Creek Watershed to support native brook trout habitat
- Investigate opportunities to designate additional wellhead protection areas, particularly in areas underlain by Karst topography, to protect drinking water supplies
- Plan for the mitigation of hazards to critical infrastructure such as roads or community facilities that may be sited in locations vulnerable to flooding or weather-related events through relocation or disaster-proofing measures

➤ **To the extent possible, maintain forest canopy within the Urban and Town Growth Areas through development review processes**

Onsite forest retention, or the creation of new forest is the preferred option for achieving forest mitigation requirements for a given development project. Within planned growth areas, such as the County's designated Urban and Town Growth Areas, this objective is more difficult to achieve due to the density and intensity of development. Nevertheless, with innovative site planning and diligent review of plans it is possible to achieve at least some measure of onsite forest mitigation with the majority of projects that occur. The County should continue to collaborate with developers, property owners and consultants during the development review process to pursue context sensitive development that maintains forest canopy and safeguards sensitive environmental resources to the greatest extent practicable. The City of Hagerstown makes extensive use of street trees to maintain



forest cover within its jurisdictional limits. In cases where more preferred onsite techniques in the Forest Conservation Ordinance have been exhausted or are not feasible for a given project, flexible techniques such as this should be more frequently utilized to maintain canopy in urbanized lands where the County does forest conservation review.

A tree canopy assessment is an important starting point to determine areas where additional tree planting is needed within both urban and rural areas. The County currently uses land use land cover data to provide an approximate baseline for understanding the current extent of forest cover throughout its borders. A tree canopy assessment would provide finer grained detail on existing canopy coverage than current data allows for. With this information in hand, the County would be empowered to set clear and realistic goals for canopy coverage within urban and/or rural areas.

➤ **Utilize undeveloped portions of park lands for natural resource enhancement or protection**

Many parks contain open areas which are available to visitor use, but do not contain facilities or amenities for visitors to use. Such areas should be considered tree planting or wildlife habitat restoration projects if they are located in sections of parks that are unlikely to be developed in the future (i.e. – distant to access points, unsuitable topography, etc.). Regional scale parks, or parks along waterways would be ripe for consideration.

Additionally, in limited cases, some park lands that are already open and inaccessible to the public could be considered as potential for the installation of renewable energy generating facilities, particularly on a smaller scale. The County has already undertaken solar projects on brownfield sites such as closed or inactive landfills. This would be an extension of that strategy in a slightly different public land context.

The County's recently adopted Solid Waste Management and Recycling Plan also recommended the development of a pilot recycling program at a County Park to capture materials currently landfilled. Currently, no recycling occurs at County Parks unless it falls under the Special Events Recycling Program legislation or is done by private parties by their own accord. The pilot program could either be undertaken by the contractor who currently services the chosen location or by County staff until the program model and costs were ironed out during the trial period. Receptacles for recycling would be provided at the chosen park in addition to those currently provided for trash. Potential locations for the implementation of such a program could be at Marty Snook Park (either parkwide or at the swimming pool), Black Rock Golf Course, or Pinesburg Softball Complex. These locations would offer enough visitor use to provide an accurate cost-benefit analysis of such a pilot program.

➤ **Consider permitting overlapping land preservation easements where easements protect different natural resources**

It has been a longstanding County policy not to allow overlapping permanent easements on protected lands. The primary motivation behind this policy is not to duplicate compensation to a landowner for the same piece of land.



There are some cases however, where different easement types may permanently protect different natural resources on the property. Many agricultural land preservation programs, for example, do not offer permanent protection for existing forest lands located on properties where the primary land use is agricultural. On such forest lands where conversion to use for crop lands or pasture is impractical or would negatively impact sensitive environmental resources such as surface or ground water integrity (onsite or downstream), there would be a clear benefit to guaranteeing permanent retention of the existing forest cover. Further, Forest Conservation Act easements, for example, typically do not result in landowner compensation at the time of creation when created onsite (landowner compensation does sometimes occur as part of the establishment of an offsite forest easement through various means). Thus, onsite Forest Conservation Act easements placed on preserved agricultural lands would not violate the basic policy of refraining from providing duplicative compensation for the same piece of land.

Offsite Forest Conservation Act easements in which compensation between parties occurs could be evaluated case by case to determine whether there is merit in providing additional protection for forest resource lands on the parcel in question. This is essentially the approach taken by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) in the administration of their permanent easements. Forest easements are not outright prohibited on MALPP easements, but there are restrictions and each request is evaluated for its consistency with the overall intent of the existing MALPP easement encumbering the property.

CREP contract lands also offer another example where establishing an overlapping forest easement could ensure permanent protection of riparian buffers, stabilization of highly erodible soils and restoration of wetlands. The CREP program requires a two-step process to accomplish permanent protection of the enrolled land area. First, the landowner enters into a 15 year lease contract (CREP contract) to take land out of production and to install best management practices for water quality. For some of that land, a second step involves permanently protecting the land taken out of production and the best management practices on it by selling a permanent conservation easement.

Not all CREP contract lands eventually receive a permanent conservation easement, which leaves open the possibility that sensitive lands may be converted back to an agricultural use. CREP lands which possess characteristics that make them unlikely to receive a permanent conservation easement after the contract period terminates could maintain the environmental benefits to the property by overlapping them with a permanent forest easement that would essentially pick up where the CREP contract left off.





## IV. AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

### A. Executive Summary

In the 1970's, housing booms marked the arrival of a new era of fast paced urbanization projects that spread into historically rural areas. This trend caused a marked decline in agricultural resources and spurred efforts within the County to preserve quality agricultural land. At the same time, many State and Federal agencies were also developing different conservation programs directed at preserving farmland on a larger scale. In April 1978 the County established a new land preservation program. It consisted at the time of one easement program started by the State known as the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program (MALPP). Over the 40-plus year period, the County's land preservation program has been active; it has grown to the administration of nine different programs that have permanently preserved over 33,000 acres of agricultural land. To leverage the greatest benefit from the MALPP program, Washington County participates in, and is certified by, the Program for the Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs. The most recent re-certification was approved in September 2021.

#### Agricultural Industry in Washington County

Since its establishment in 1776, Washington County has been a primarily rural agrarian society. Agriculture is still currently the primary land use in the County. According to the US Department of Agriculture: Census of Agriculture, in 2017 there were approximately 119,248 acres of land in the County included in farms. The USDA Census of Agriculture defines a farm as "any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, in the census year."

The table below shows changes in Washington County agricultural land since County began preserving this land in 1978. The overall acreage in farms has consistently declined as the County has become more urbanized. The number of farms has been steadily rising since reaching a low of 768 farms in 1997. The 877 farms counted in 2017 represents the largest number in Washington County since the 1987 Census of Agriculture. Paired with the fluctuations in the average size of farms, this points to an overall trend towards a larger number of farms which are smaller in size than they were historically before more land was subdivided. Efforts that the County has made to address development in rural areas of the County is discussed further in the Land Use Management subsection below.

**Table 17: Statistical Changes in Agricultural Land in Washington County, MD (1978-2017)**

<b>Acreage, Number and Size of Farms in Washington County, MD 1978-2012</b>									
	<b>1978</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>Land in Farms</b>	151,065	145,983	137,529	123,932	126,292	125,159	114,065	129,600	119,248
<b># of Farms</b>	878	962	906	809	768	775	844	860	877
<b>Average Size of Farms</b>	172	152	152	153	164	161	135	151	136

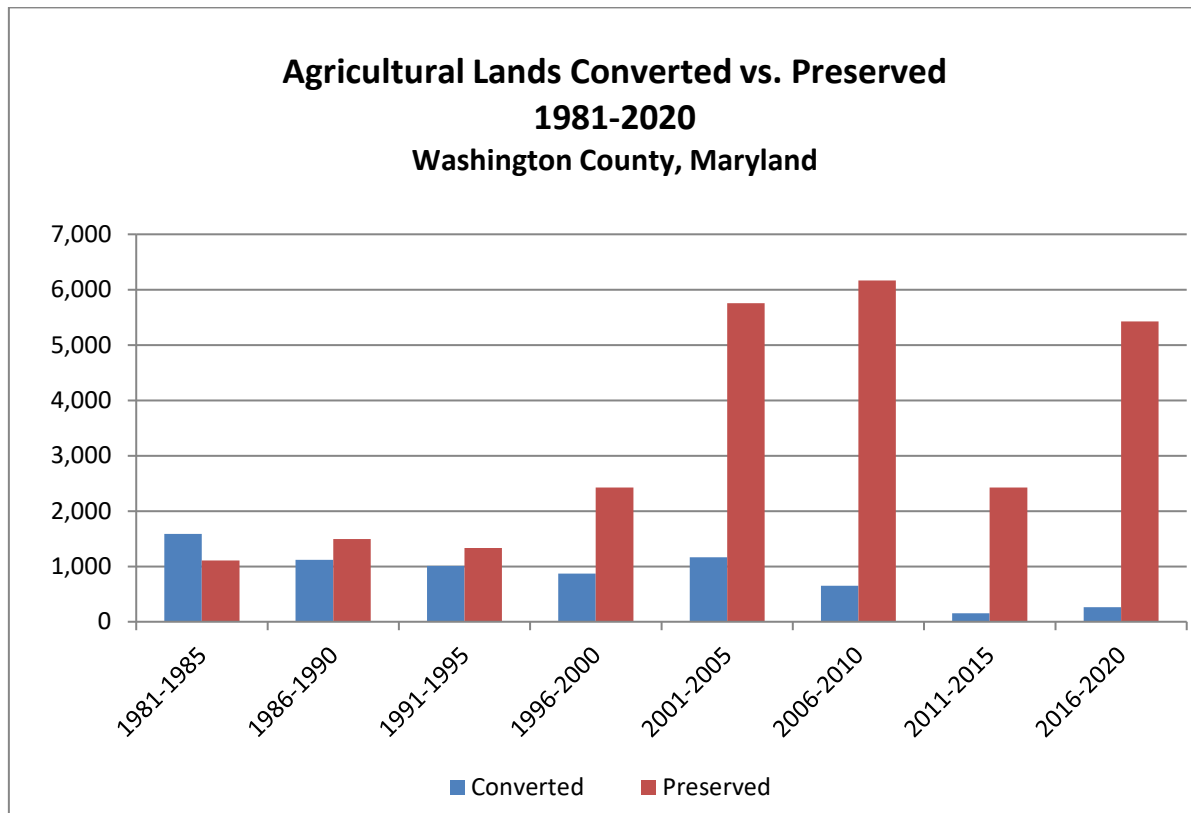
Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

After adoption of the 1980 Comprehensive Plan, the County began to track the amount of land preserved vs. the amount of land converted to uses other than agriculture or woodlands. This became a new metric by which the County could more accurately determine if land preservation programs and other land management programs are effectively reducing sprawl and preserving open space. As shown in the chart below, after an initial period of high conversion vs. preservation, the County has continued to





outpace conversion with land preservation efforts for the last 30 years. During most of the five year periods surveyed since 2000, preservation of agricultural land has exceeded its conversion by a 5:1 ratio.

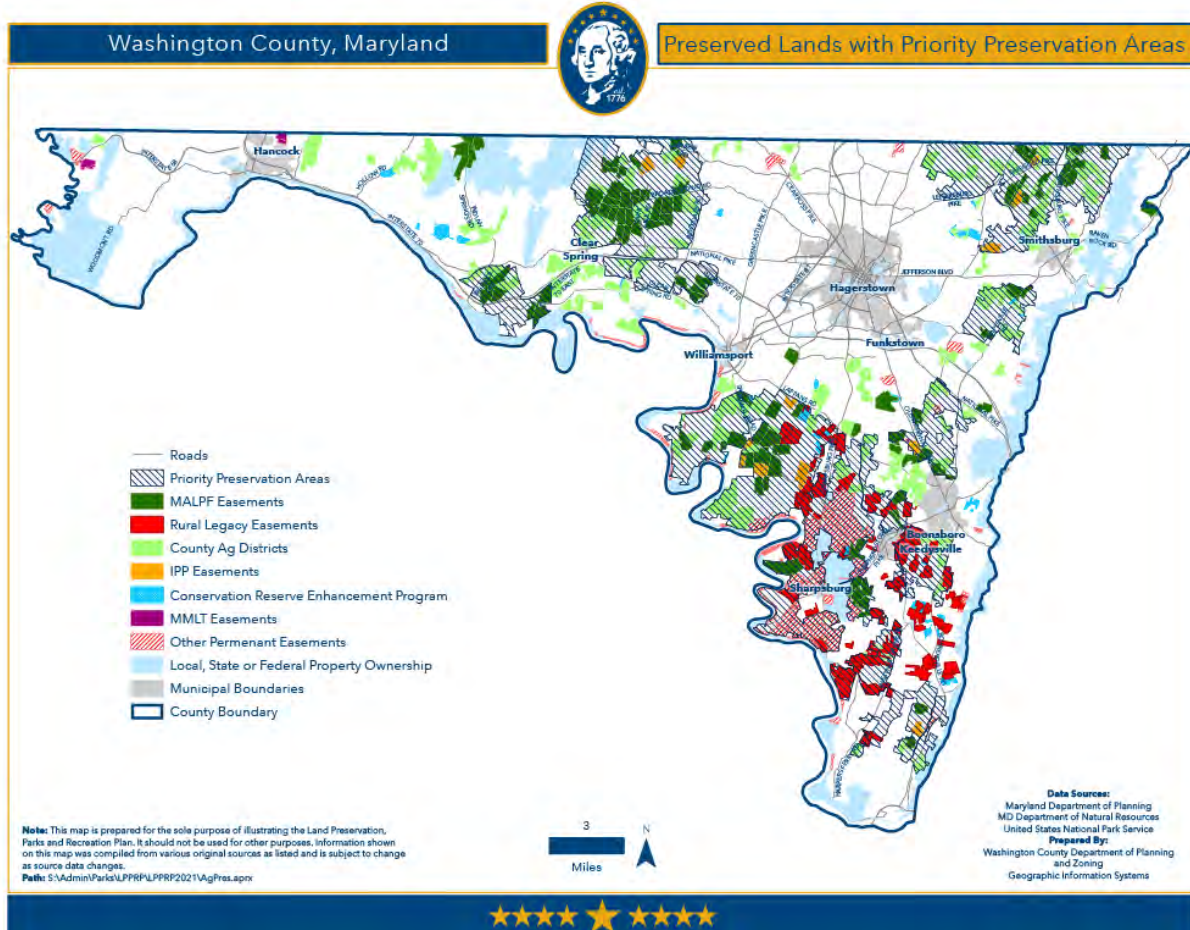


**Figure 3: Agricultural Lands Converted vs. Preserved in Washington County, MD (1981-2020)**

As shown in Map 16 below, approximately 28,486 acres within the PPAs are under permanent preservation easements. The bulk of preserved agricultural lands on this map were acquired under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program and the Rural Legacy Program. The umbrella category of Other Permanent Easements, composed of numerous easement programs that were substantially described in the Preserved Natural Resource Lands section of the LPPRP, preserves substantial lands around Antietam Battlefield. County Ag Districts, also displayed prominently on the map, are areas which are targeted for future land preservation in exchange for certain benefits as well as limitations on development.

County agricultural land preservation efforts are concentrated primarily within three distinct regions of the County:

- Southern Washington County in the vicinity of Antietam Battlefield and the towns of Sharpsburg, Boonsboro and Keedysville
- North of the Town of Clear Spring
- North of the Town of Smithsburg



Map 16: Preserved Lands with Priority Preservation Areas

## B. Goals for Agricultural Land Preservation

### County Goals for Agricultural Land Preservation

The agricultural industry plays a major role in the economy, sustainability, and overall character of Washington County. Recognizing this fact, the County has developed several goals and objectives in the Comprehensive Plan to help support growth of the industry. Primarily, Comprehensive Plan Goal #2 states the County’s priority in supporting the agricultural industry by “*Promote a balanced and diversified economy, including agriculture.*” The main agricultural objective to this end is to “Maintain at least 50,000 acres in the County in agricultural production by expanding current agricultural land preservation initiatives with an emphasis on preserving farming as a way of life and promoting the agricultural support industry.” This acreage goal was developed in the early 1990s in coordination with the Agricultural Extension Office and the University of Maryland based on an evaluation of critical land mass needed to support the agriculture industry.

Listed below are excerpts of goals and objectives from the Plan to demonstrate the County’s desire to promote the agricultural industry.



### Environmental Resources Management

- Continue efforts to develop permanent funding sources that can sustain an agricultural easement and development rights acquisition program.
- Continue the Agricultural District Program as an interim program to support agricultural preservation until agricultural easements can be acquired.
- Continue integrating setbacks, screening and buffering for residential development proposed adjacent to agricultural preservation districts or easements that would require mitigation to protect the integrity of the agricultural property and not the proposed residential development.
- Continue to work with the Washington County Soil Conservation District and the Agricultural Extension Agency to enhance current regulatory requirements that address animal waste collection and disposal processes to insure balance with environmental concerns

### Agricultural Resource Goals

- Preserve and maintain a targeted amount of land in the County in agricultural production by expanding current agricultural land preservation initiatives with an emphasis on preserving farming as a way of life and promoting the agricultural support industry.
- Utilize agricultural land preservation programs in addition to other regulatory tools to promote desired land use patterns in Urban and Rural Areas
- Target development away from lands with quality agricultural soils; thereby, maximizing agricultural potential and limiting conflicts with existing agricultural operations.
- Promote education and start up assistance to inspire a new generation of young farmers.
- Provide additional Agri-tourism opportunities for farmers to expand operations with value added products or cottage industry type uses.
- Evaluate impacts of commercial land uses to land preservation efforts such as those resulting from alternative energy systems or Agri-tourism endeavors.
- Promote best management practices on farmlands that reduce runoff and water pollution.
- Continue to support the Rural Heritage Museum and the Agricultural Education Center as an opportunity to educate citizens on our agricultural history and expose younger citizens to the ways of farming in order to spur interest in a new generation of farmers.
- Promote Rural Legacy initiatives in all the rural areas of the County.

### State Goals for Agricultural Land Preservation

- ◆ Permanently preserve agricultural land capable of supporting a reasonable diversity of agricultural production;
- ◆ Protect natural, forestry and historic resources and the rural character of the landscape associated with Maryland's farmland;
- ◆ To the greatest degree possible, concentrate preserved land in large, relatively contiguous blocks to effectively support long-term protection of resources and resource-based industries;
- ◆ Limit the intrusion of development and its impacts on rural resources and resource-based industries;
- ◆ Ensure good return on public investment by concentrating state agricultural land preservation funds in areas where the investment is reasonably well supported by both local investment and land use management programs;



- ◆ Work with local governments to achieve the following:
  - Establish preservation areas, goals and strategies through local comprehensive planning processes that address and complement state goals;
  - In each area designated for preservation, develop a shared understanding of goals and the strategy to achieve them among rural landowners, the public-at-large and state and local government officials;
  - Protect the equity interests of rural landowners in preservation areas by ensuring sufficient public commitment and investment in preservation through easement acquisition and incentive programs;
  - Use local land use management authority effectively to protect public investment in preservation by managing development in rural preservation areas;
  - Establish effective measures to support profitable agriculture, including assistance in production, marketing and the practice of stewardship, so that farming remains a desirable way of life for both the farmer and public-at-large.

## C. Implementation Programs and Services

### i. Implementation of Previous Plan

The primary method used in Washington County to implement the goals for agricultural land preservation is through easement acquisition. Through a combination of several land preservation programs, the County spent approximately \$9.8 million to preserve about 2600 acres of land between FY 2011-2016 according to the 2017 LPPRP. In this update the County reports that more than \$15 million was spent to preserve nearly 5200 acres. Both the amount of money spent and acreage preserved are nearly double what was reported in the 2017 LPPRP. The reason for the large difference between the two plans relates to the economic recession that occurred in the first part of the decade versus a marked increase in preservation funding at the end of the decade as the economy recovered. The County has continued to look for alternative funding mechanisms, such as Transferable Development Rights (TDRs), and increased County commitment to programs that provide matching funds.

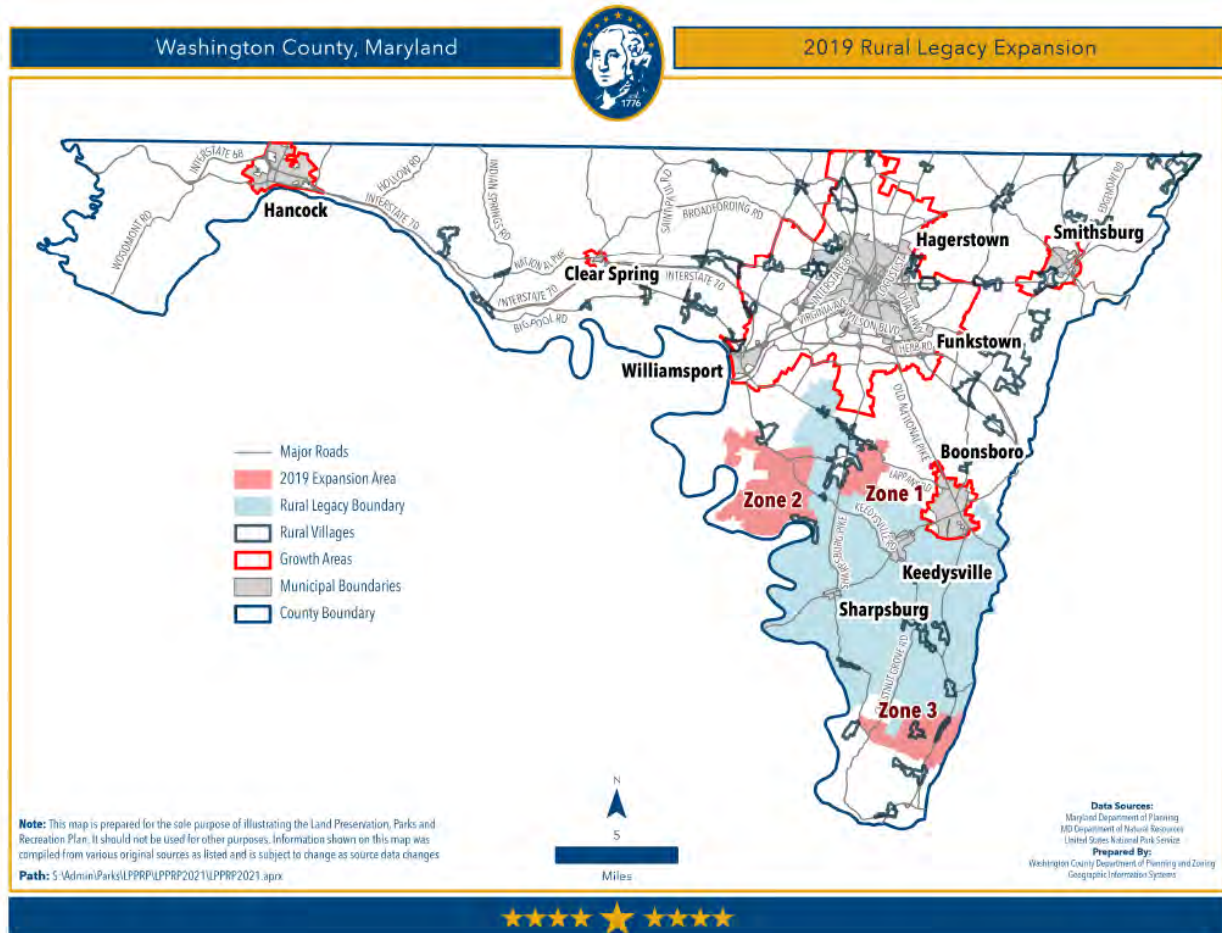
While the Installment Payment Program has proven to be successful in obtaining new easements, the County has determined that funding for the program would be better used to leverage MALPF 60/40 Match funding. Historically, agriculture and real estate transfer taxes have been used to fund both the IPP and the 60/40 Match. However, they have never been plentiful enough to max out the 60/40 Match. Currently, approximately \$200,000 per year is being used by the IPP program. Land Preservation staff and the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board have concluded that the entirety of available transfer tax dollars being funneled to the 60/40 Match would further the County's preservation goals since the State provides matching funding. The more the County commits, the more the State matches; and the more the total dollar amount, the more acreage can be preserved. The IPP program is about halfway through its current cycle, so once that cycle ends, the County intends to use those funds toward the MALPF 60/40 Match. While the IPP program has its beneficial purposes, the concept of a TDR program has been all but abandoned. Rising housing costs, increased infrastructure needs (i.e. - residential sprinkler systems, advanced technology septic systems, and increased stormwater management needs), and low median household incomes have nearly priced average County citizens out of the market. It has been determined that adding additional costs like those associated with TDR programs would be too much of a burden if the County wishes to maintain a high level of home ownership.

In 2018, the County began the process of expanding its Rural Legacy Area (RLA), an effort that would





result in an additional 12,000 acres being added to the existing RLA (see map below). This action immediately tripled the interest in preservation easement applicants in the area surrounding Antietam Battlefield and had begun to bear fruit by the end of the 2021 fiscal year with easement contracts for high-quality properties in place.



Map 17: Expanded Rural Legacy Areas

Assistance programs have been put in place over the years to help support the agricultural industry. Past accomplishments have been the hiring of an Agricultural Marketing Specialist, continued support of the Agriculture Education Center, and adoption of a Right to Farm Ordinance. These programs have been successful in educating the public on agricultural techniques and sourcing of food resources. The marketing specialist continues to provide opportunities for local farmers to sell products locally at farm markets and special events. This position also continues to give a face to local agricultural operations and farms by using technology (farm market app) and event planning (ag expo, farmers markets) to bring the buyer and seller together.

The Right to Farm Ordinance is another tool used by the County to help educate the public on the operations of the agricultural industry. The purpose of the Ordinance is to candidly make new property owners aware of the potential conflicts between an agricultural operation and residential uses. It is also intended to provide some protection to existing farm operations from the potential complaints of encroaching development regarding issues such as noise, odor, and insect control. While a useful tool if



needed, there has been only one case brought before the Right to Farm Board since its inception.

**Land Preservation and Easement Acquisition**

The primary efforts to protect and preserve agricultural land are still through the purchase of development rights with various land preservation programs administered by the County. Easement purchase programs such as the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program (MALPP), Rural Legacy Program (RLP), Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) (recently reorganized into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Project Open Space – Stateside, Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program and Installment Payment Purchases (IPP) are being used to further our goal of permanently preserving 50,000 acres of land. The County has also continued to work with several land trust organizations such as the Maryland Environmental Trust and the American Battlefield Preservation Trust to gain additional land preservation easements. As shown in the chart below, the County continues to have success in easement purchases.

**Table 16: Land Preservation Expenditures in Washington County, MD (2017-2021)**

Land Preservation Expenditures FY 2017-2021				
	PROGRAM	ACRES	FARMS	AMOUNT
2017	MALPF	0	0	\$0.00
	Rural Legacy	209.03	5	\$615,090.00
	CREP	152.98	3	\$432,463.69
	Other Permanent Easements	451.2513	7	\$1,486,787.87
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>813.2613</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>\$2,534,341.56</b>
2018	MALPF	135.513	1	\$496,500.00
	Rural Legacy	334.83	3	\$1,074,177.62
	CREP	102.141	2	\$328,642.12
	Other Permanent Easements	350.62	3	\$859,802.37
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>923.104</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$2,759,122.11</b>
2019	MALPF	456.764	3	\$1,733,022.00
	Rural Legacy	824.11	7	\$2,719,016.67
	CREP	302.47	4	\$940,741.82
	Other Permanent Easements	3.5	1	\$0.00
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1586.844</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>\$5,392,780.49</b>
2020	MALPF	161.66	2	\$595,500.00
	Rural Legacy	166.685	5	\$468,175.21
	CREP	0	0	\$0.00
	Other Permanent Easements	250.01	3	\$519,250.00
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>578.355</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>\$1,582,925.21</b>
2021	MALPF	503.3448	4	\$1,370,898.60
	Rural Legacy	391.71	5	\$683,653.64
	CREP	275.604	3	\$543,487.52
	Other Permanent Easements	116.22	1	\$326,514.00





	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1286.879</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>\$2,924,553.76</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5188.443</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>\$15,193,723.13</b>

Most easement acquisitions come from the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program and Rural Legacy Programs. The MALPP is a joint easement program between the State and the County to acquire highly productive agricultural land by purchasing easements that extinguish development rights on a property. The RLP is similar to MALPP but includes a broadened scope of easement purchases within a more narrowly defined area of the County. The RLP seeks to protect farmland and open space which contains significant agricultural, environmental and cultural/historic features. Properties that possess more of these attributes are given higher priority rankings and awarded higher easement values. This program only purchases easements within a specified area within southern Washington County, surrounding the towns of Sharpsburg, Keedysville, and Boonsboro, as well as several nearby Rural Villages. A full listing of easements settled to date is in the Appendix. Other tools used by the County to assist in the protection of farmland are preferential tax treatment for agriculturally assessed land, rural zoning classifications and the Agricultural Land Preservation District Program.

The Agricultural Land Preservation District Program (“Ag District”) encourages landowners to voluntarily enter an Agricultural Land Preservation District in which it is agreed that the land will not be developed for a period of at least ten years (or five years if renewing the district after their initial ten-year agreement). In return for that restriction, the landowner receives protection from nuisance complaints and becomes eligible to sell a MALPP Easement. The owner may exercise the option of selling an easement to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation provided that the offer to sell is recommended by the County’s Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board (“Ag Board”) and the Board of County Commissioners. Locally, the Ag Board reviews and ranks easement applications, assigning point value to categories such as farm size, soil quality and development pressure. If purchased by the State, the easement will remain in effect in perpetuity.

Assistance Programs



The County continues to use an Agricultural Marketing Specialist to assist in promoting the agricultural industry in Washington County. The Agricultural Marketing Office is responsible for developing, marketing, and managing economic development strategies and implementing marketing programs to attract, retain, preserve and grow agricultural enterprises and related industries in Washington County. Since its inception, the Agricultural Marketing Office has enhanced the visibility of the agriculture industry in the County by promoting farmers markets, ag expos, farm tours, Agritourism events, and educational and safety courses.

The Office has released a mobile app called Washington County Agritourism Guide. The app provides locations of farmer’s markets, discusses the benefits of agriculture, provides news updates on upcoming Agritourism events, and introduces the public to local farmers. It is an effort to close the gap between the producer and the purchaser supporting local and statewide efforts to endorse “Locally Grown” initiatives.

Another important project the County Commissioners have supported is the Agriculture Education Center. Owned and operated by the County, with financial assistance from the State, the



Education Center holds events year-round to promote and educate people about the agricultural industry. It includes a Rural Heritage Museum featuring exhibits depicting early rural life in Washington County prior to 1940. A second museum building houses larger pieces of farm equipment and farm implements. It shows the progression from human powered and horse drawn equipment to the motorized era.

The Rural Heritage Farmstead began in 1999 when a windmill was relocated to the upper portion of the property. Since then, there have been many additions including two log homes, an outdoor drying shed, a brick wood fired bread oven, and a pavilion to house a sawmill.



Photo 10: Washington County Rural Heritage Museum

The gardens include a German Four-Square garden filled with heirloom plants including vegetables, herbs, and flowers; a large garden for planting potatoes for the museum's annual Spud Fest, was recently expanded to include three sisters, rye, wheat, and a berry patch.

Located on the lower grounds, adjacent to the museum buildings is the Rural Heritage Village which continues to grow. Currently, there is a log church, a log home, and a Doctor's Office. Future plans for the village include a cobbler and broom makers shop, a carpenter's shop, and a blacksmith shop. This exhibit will serve to educate the visitor about life in Washington County in the decades surrounding the Civil War.

## Land Use Management

Washington County land use policies and decisions are guided by the 2002 Comprehensive Plan. Since its adoption, various economic, environmental, and social changes have occurred that continue to dynamically shape our local land use policies. However, our primary goal of directing development into designated growth areas and preservation of our open spaces has continued to be the primary objective in land management policies.

To that end, the County has evaluated and amended several regulatory documents to implement this primary objective. In 2005, the Board of County Commissioners adopted new rural area zoning districts that reduced the amount of potential development allowed outside of designated Growth Area boundaries. Four new zoning districts were designated and applied in the rural areas of the County to decrease development pressure and increase open space protections. The four zoning districts include:



**Agriculture Rural District**

Permits residential density at a rate of one (1) dwelling unit per five (5) acres of land

**Environmental Conservation District**

Permits residential density at a rate of one (1) dwelling unit per twenty (20) acres of

**Preservation District**

Permits residential density at a rate of one (1) dwelling unit per thirty (30) acres of land owned.

**Rural Village District**

Provides small areas with existing dense residential development to allow for infill.

In 2010, the County amended its Comprehensive Plan to include Priority Preservation Areas. Three large and three small areas totaling 74,854 acres were delineated in accordance with the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 as areas where land preservation efforts should be directed. Location within these areas was added as a category for evaluation as part of the priority ranking system. Inclusion in this evaluation has helped direct land preservation funding more efficiently into areas of existing land preservation.

In 2012 and 2016, the County completed Comprehensive rezoning of the Urban Growth Area and Town Growth Areas respectively. These amendments included increased residential development densities in areas where infrastructure is currently available.

The 2012 strategy to “Work with the Washington County Soil Conservation District and the Agricultural Extension Agency to enhance current regulatory requirements that address animal waste collection and disposal processes to ensure balance with environmental concerns” has resulted in a coordination of effort between Washington County Staff and Soil Conservation personnel in implementing best management practices in land preservation and agricultural practices in general, including:

- ◆ CREP and Rural Legacy projects employ the use of stream buffers and another agricultural BMP’s;
- ◆ Many MALPF and Ag District holders have been working with SCD to implement State and federal required BMP’s on private lands;
- ◆ The Ag community has been generally accepting of these processes and has put forth exceptional efforts to curb any adverse effects on the environment.

## **D. Deficiencies and Recommendations**

### **➤ Funding for Easement Programs**

As is usually the case with easement purchase programs, funding continues to be the major limiting factor in obtaining our goals. The land preservation program has been continuing to try to adapt to the lack of funding through alternative efforts such as land donation, reduced value easements, long term purchase programs (i.e. - IPPs where installment payments are made over a 10-year period), and easement donations that can be offset through tax credits and incentives.

Another limiting factor in using easement purchase programs has become the overwhelming amount of documentation and easement preparation. Property owners are becoming intimidated by the amount of restriction and cost of legal representation to the point that easements are beginning to be viewed as too restrictive or complicated to be worth the property owner’s time to invest.



### ➤ Ag Districts

The effectiveness of the Ag District Program is also being evaluated as part of the update of the Comprehensive Plan. Because recent changes in regulations have reduced development pressure and stabilized the land base in rural areas, there may be some merit in evaluating the effectiveness of continuing the Ag District program and the tax credit program in general. To increase the amount of land permanently preserved each year, one alternative that could be evaluated is possibly discontinuing the ag district program and redistribute those funds toward MALPF permanent easements to leverage more money from State programs. Another option may be to continue the Ag District program but discontinue tax credits on those properties that receive a permanent easement. As funding sources continue to dwindle and/or seek more investment from local entities, the tax credit program should be further evaluated to determine if the program is still effective in meeting its purpose.

### ➤ Alternative Land Uses on Agricultural Land

Just as farmers are seeking out alternative agricultural uses to supplement income, other non-agricultural uses are also being sought out because they are becoming more accessible and profitable than traditional agricultural land use. Uses such as commercial communication towers (aka - cell towers), solar energy generating systems (SEGS), and wind energy generating systems are a new wave of non-agricultural uses beginning to proliferate in Washington County that can consume large areas of land currently used as productive agricultural land.

Great effort was made to analyze which areas of the County should be delineated as a high priority for land preservation because of agricultural productivity. Since the State and County have put forth millions of dollars and other resources into land preservation to reduce large scale residential development in rural areas, it is logical that they would be seeking to place limits on land uses that would inhibit or prevent agricultural production.

A trend towards the commercialization of agricultural land for non-agricultural land uses is another industry trend that is creating challenges to land preservation efforts. Thus far in Washington County, rural based event centers in which converted barns or temporary tents on farms or large rural lots are being used to accommodate events such as weddings, festivals, and large-scale recreational activities. These activities are blurring the lines between agricultural and commercial land uses in rural areas that often have limited infrastructure to support such activities.

The installation of uses that manufacture value added products or sell items produced on the farm such as wineries, creameries, or farm stands have a direct link to the agricultural production of the land. Non-agricultural land uses such as event centers do not have the same inherent link to farm operations. If these operations occur on lands in which easements were purchased by the County or State to permanently preserve agricultural operations specifically, it becomes an open question as to whether public tax dollars are being used for the purposes for which they were expended.

Washington County is not the only jurisdiction to grapple with this issue. Other rural counties as well as the State have been weighing the same balance between maintaining a viable agricultural base while also reaping the benefits of these types of agricultural tourism uses. Recent regulatory efforts have been made by the County at achieving this balance, such as changes to the Zoning Ordinance to permit farm wineries and breweries in select rural zoning categories or adding additional language to further clarify where the County prefers to see SEGS sited (i.e. – away from prime soils).



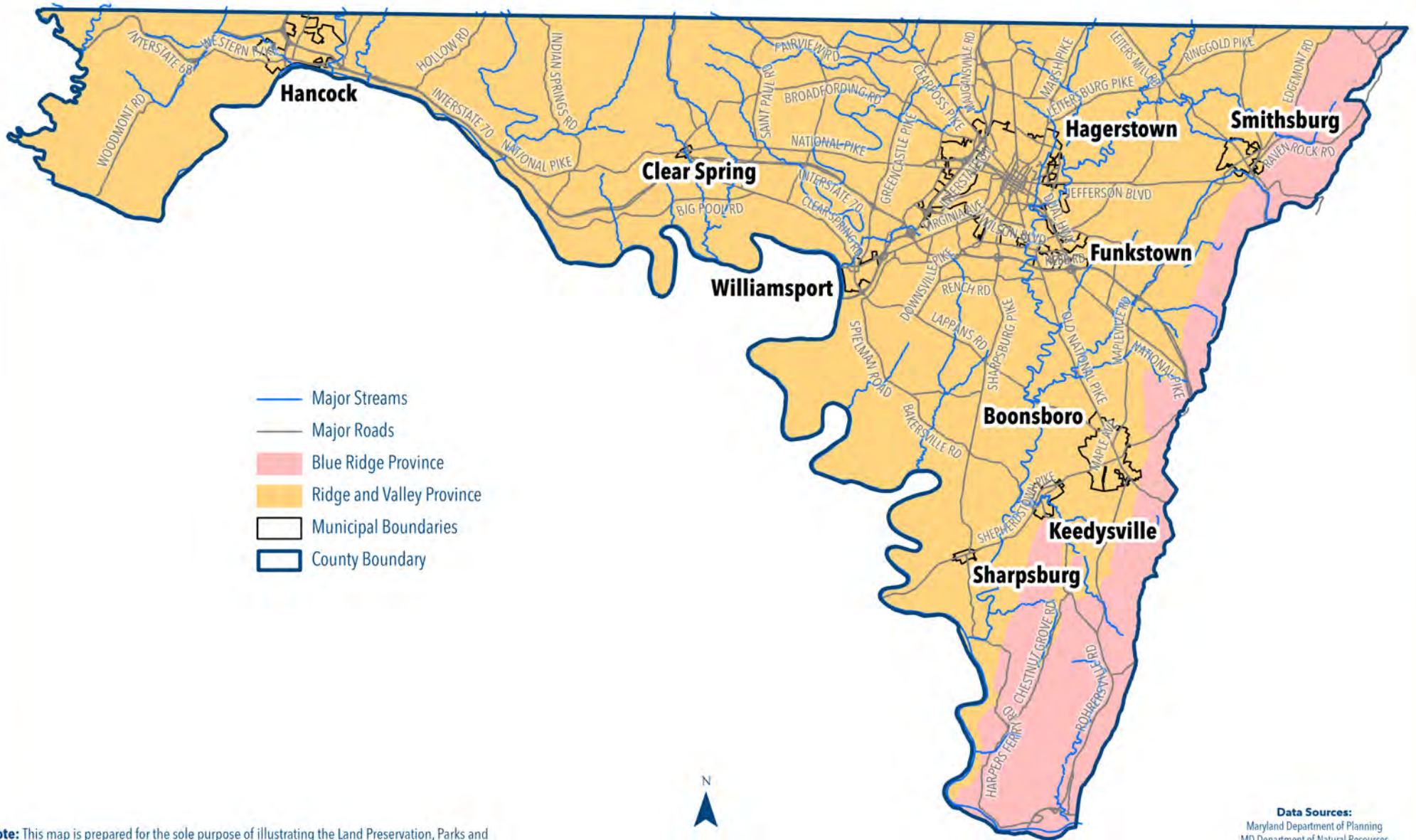








## APPENDICIES



# Appendix A

## Full Sized Maps



-  Major Streams
-  Major Roads
-  Blue Ridge Province
-  Ridge and Valley Province
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Boundary



**Note:** This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes

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**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
 United States National Park Service  
**Prepared By:**  
 Washington County Department of Planning and Zoning  
 Geographic Information Systems







-  Major Streams
-  Tree Canopy
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Boundary

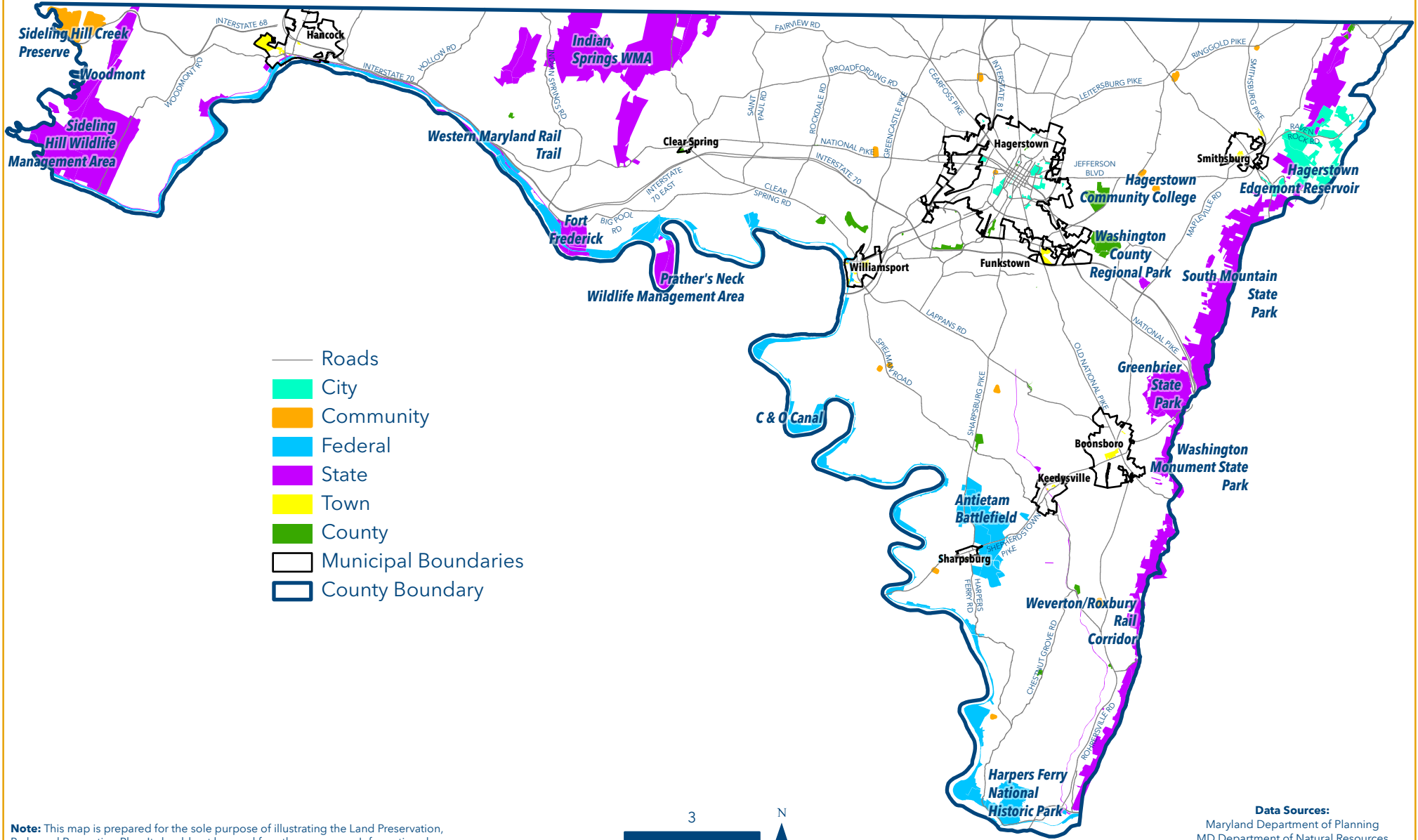


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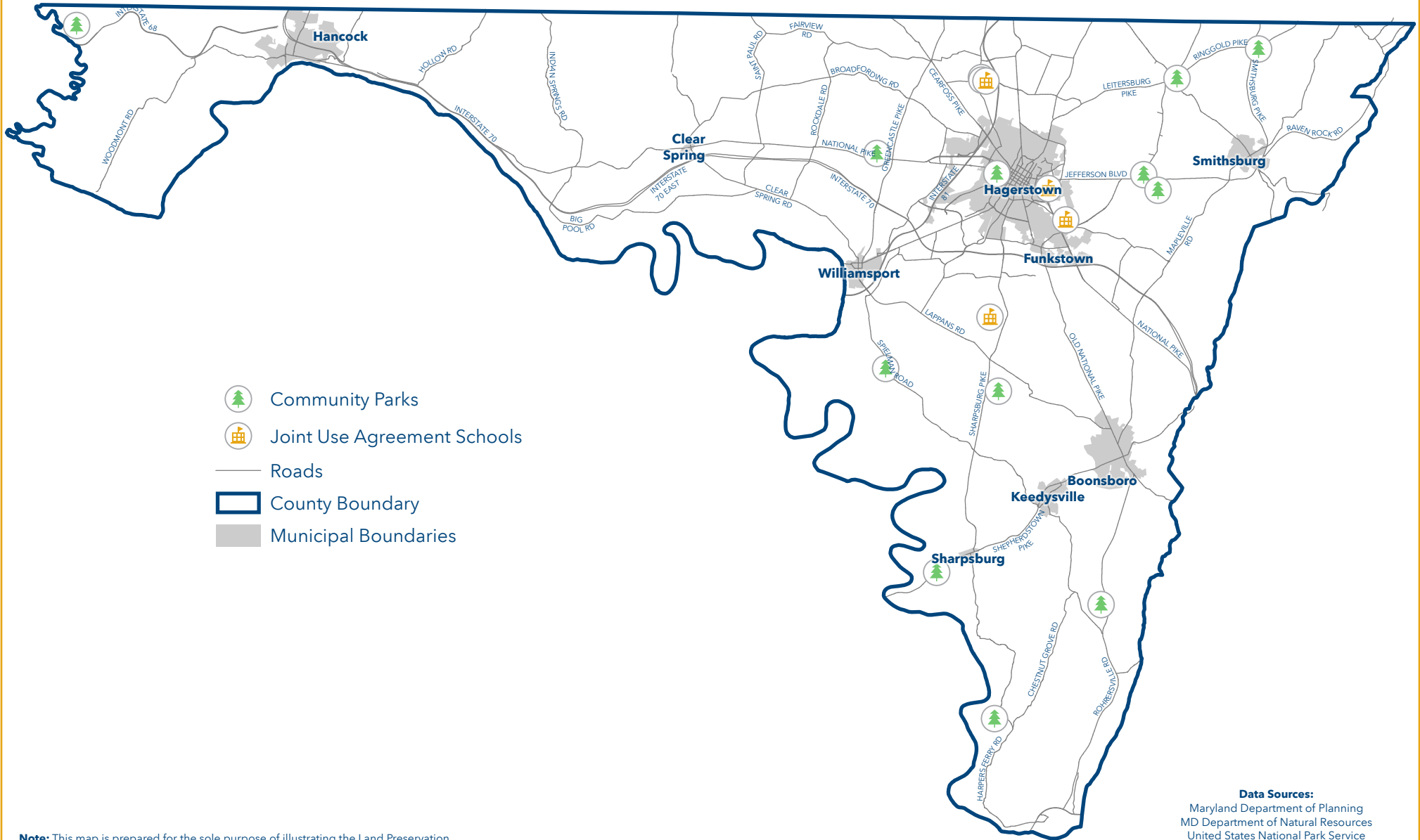


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**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
**Prepared By:**  
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 and Zoning  
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-  Community Parks
-  Joint Use Agreement Schools
-  Roads
-  County Boundary
-  Municipal Boundaries

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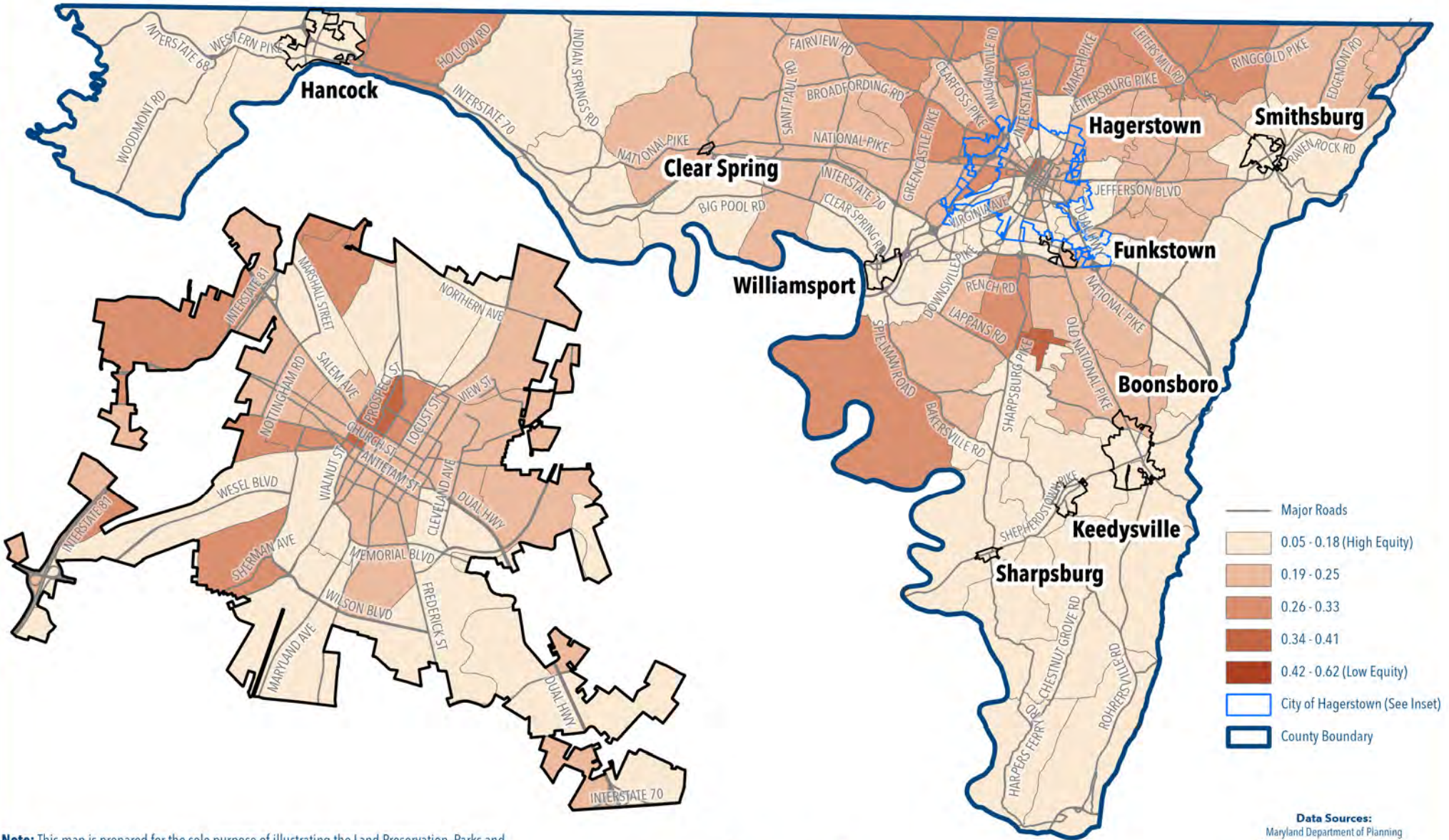


**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
 United States National Park Service

**Prepared By:**  
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 and Zoning  
 Geographic Information Systems







- Major Roads
- 0.05 - 0.18 (High Equity)
- 0.19 - 0.25
- 0.26 - 0.33
- 0.34 - 0.41
- 0.42 - 0.62 (Low Equity)
- City of Hagerstown (See Inset)
- County Boundary

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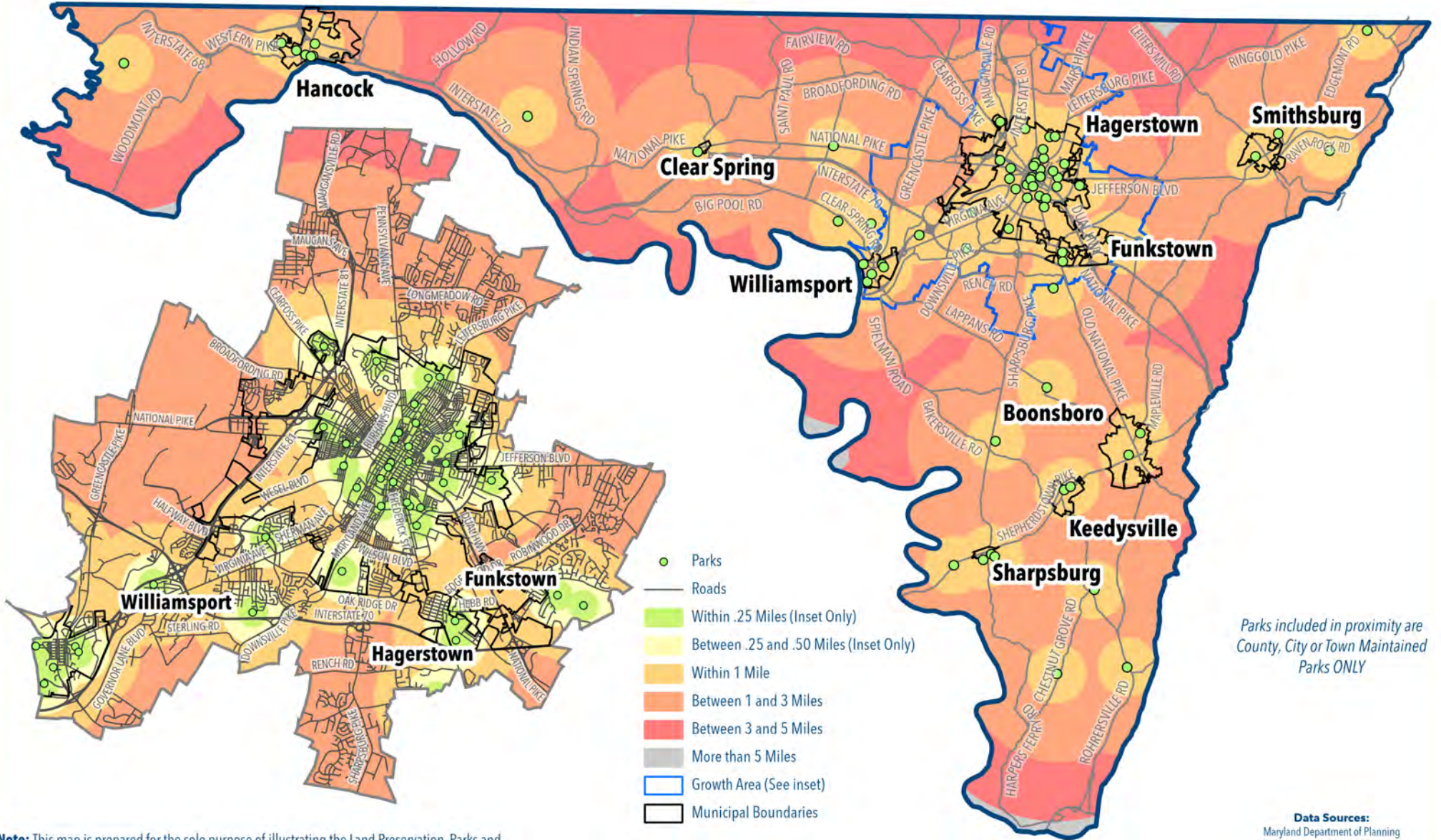
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Parks included in proximity are County, City or Town Maintained Parks ONLY

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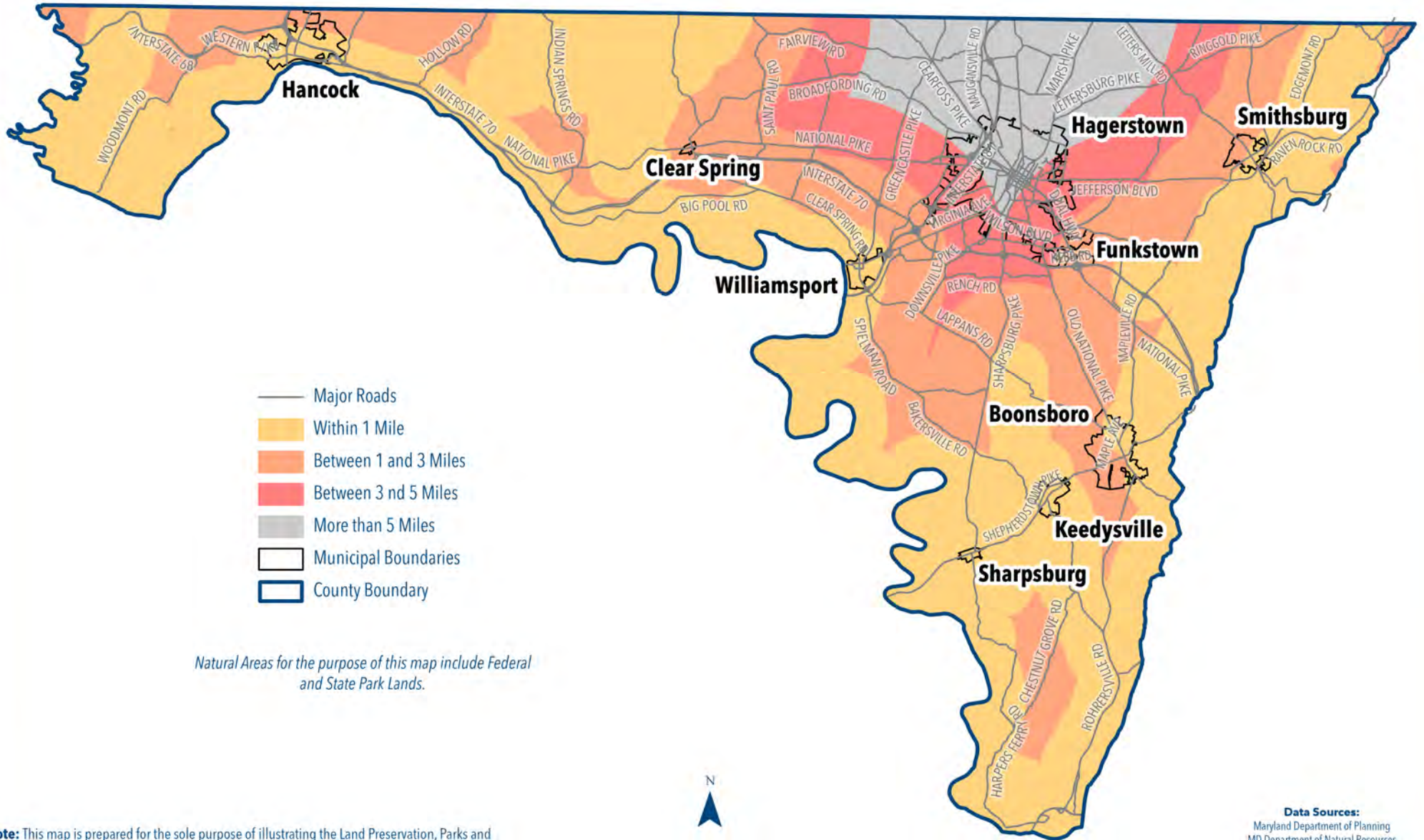


**Data Sources:**  
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 MD Department of Natural Resources  
 United States National Park Service

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 Geographic Information Systems







- Major Roads
- Within 1 Mile
- Between 1 and 3 Miles
- Between 3 and 5 Miles
- More than 5 Miles
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundary

Natural Areas for the purpose of this map include Federal and State Park Lands.



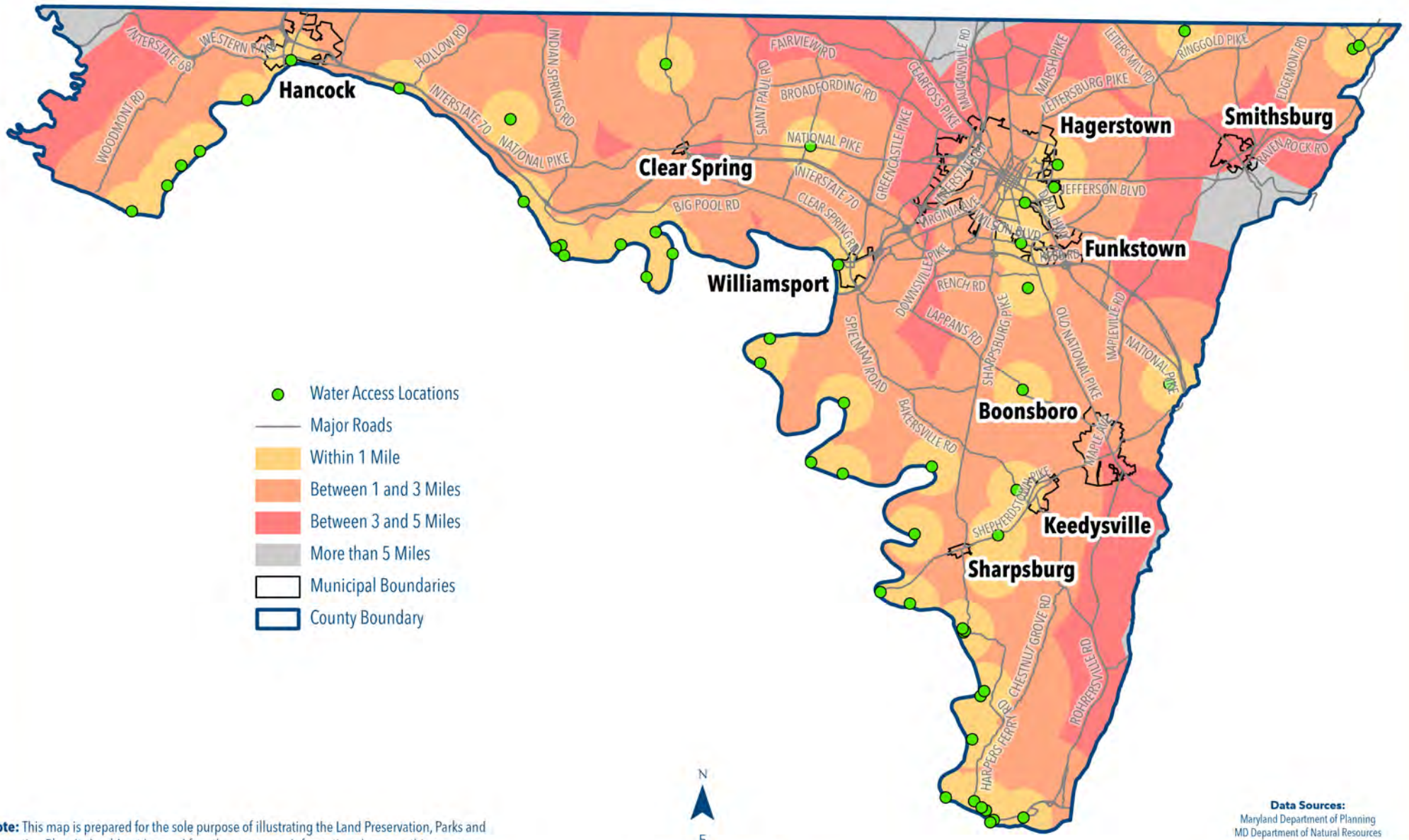
Miles

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- Water Access Locations
- Major Roads
- Within 1 Mile
- Between 1 and 3 Miles
- Between 3 and 5 Miles
- More than 5 Miles
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundary



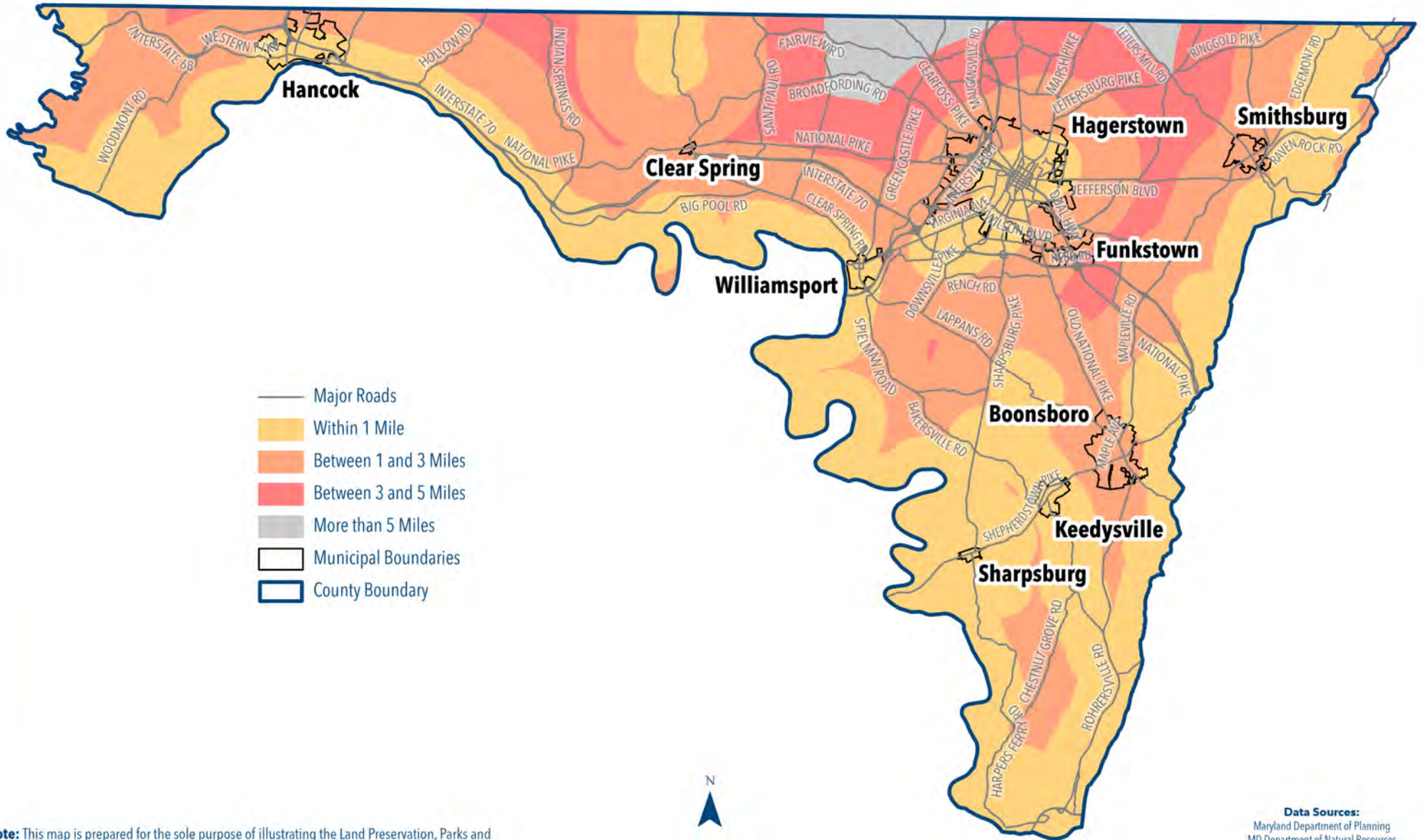
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- Major Roads
- Within 1 Mile
- Between 1 and 3 Miles
- Between 3 and 5 Miles
- More than 5 Miles
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundary



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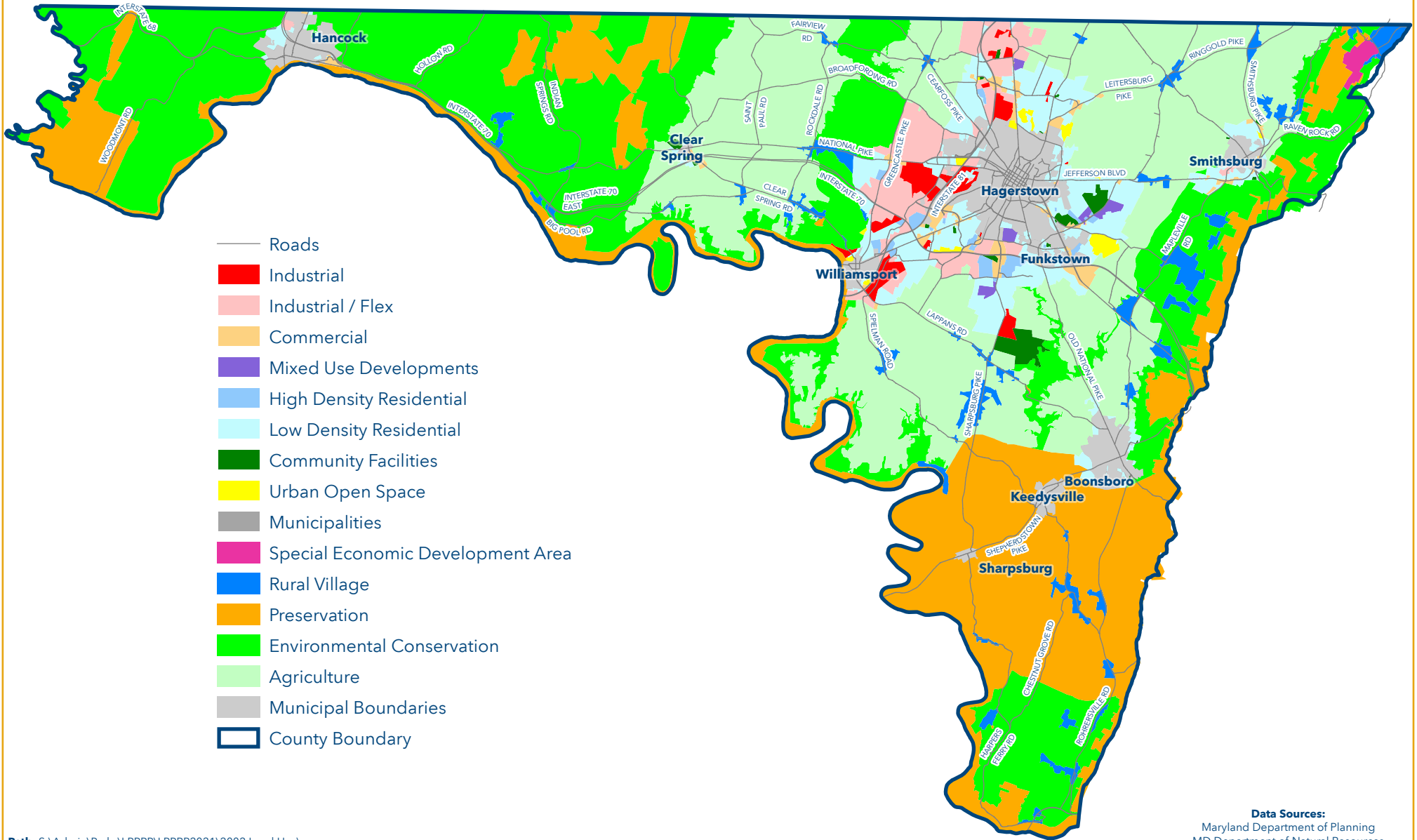
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- Roads
- Industrial
- Industrial / Flex
- Commercial
- Mixed Use Developments
- High Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Community Facilities
- Urban Open Space
- Municipalities
- Special Economic Development Area
- Rural Village
- Preservation
- Environmental Conservation
- Agriculture
- Municipal Boundaries
- ▭ County Boundary

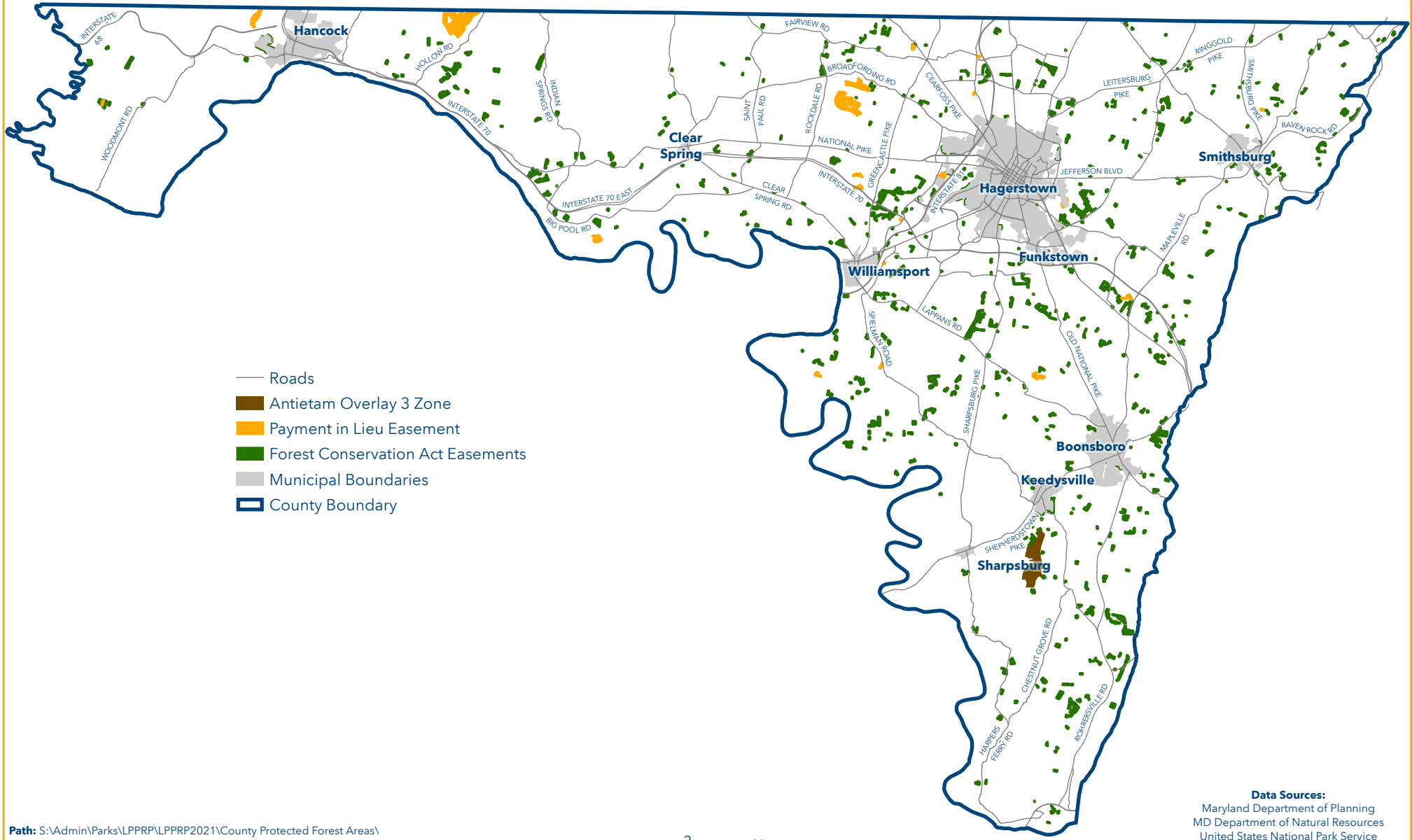
**Path:** S:\Admin\Parks\LPPRP\LPPRP2021\2002 Land Use\

**Note:** This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes.



**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
**Prepared By:**  
 Washington County Department of Planning  
 and Zoning  
 Geographic Information Systems





- Roads
- Antietam Overlay 3 Zone
- Payment in Lieu Easement
- Forest Conservation Act Easements
- Municipal Boundaries
- ▭ County Boundary

Path: S:\Admin\Parks\LPPRP\LPPRP2021\County Protected Forest Areas\

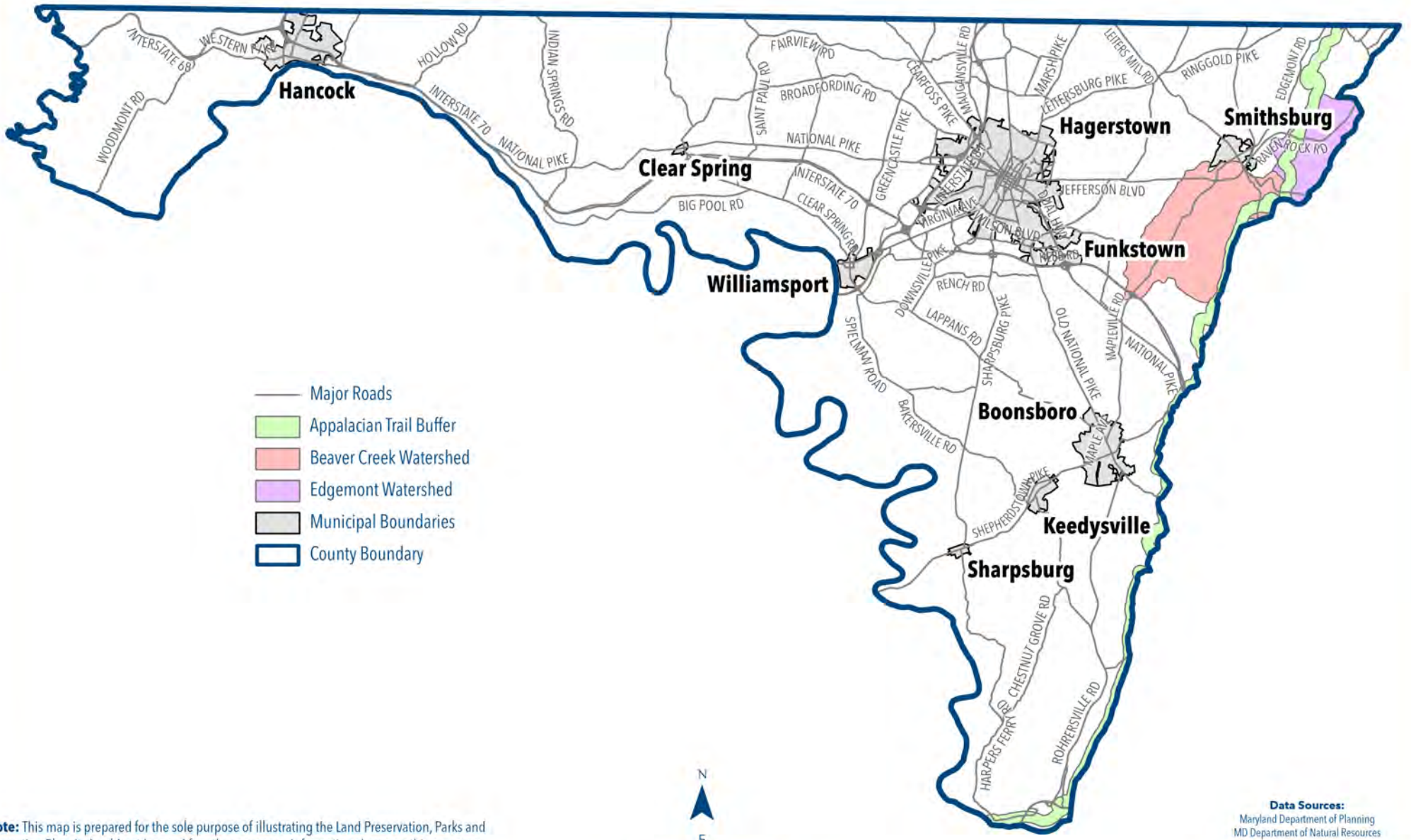
Note: This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes.



**Data Sources:**  
Maryland Department of Planning  
MD Department of Natural Resources  
United States National Park Service  
**Prepared By:**  
Washington County Department of Planning  
and Zoning  
Geographic Information Systems







- Major Roads
- Appalachian Trail Buffer
- Beaver Creek Watershed
- Edgemont Watershed
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundary



5

Miles

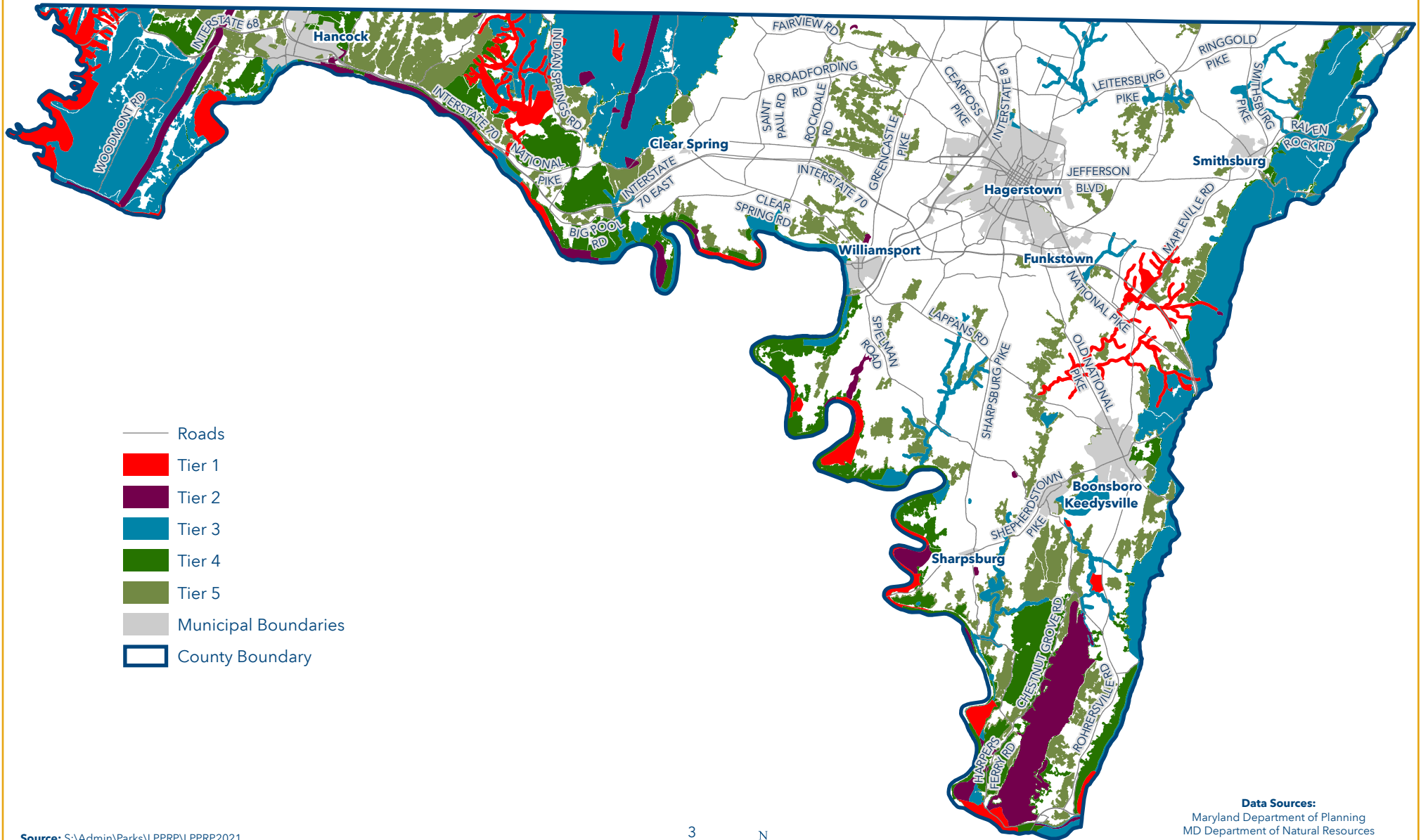
**Note:** This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes

**Path:** S:\Admin\Parks\LPPRP\LPPRP2021\LPPRP2021.aprx

**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
 United States National Park Service

**Prepared By:**  
 Washington County Department of Planning and Zoning  
 Geographic Information Systems





- Roads
- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4
- Tier 5
- ▭ Municipal Boundaries
- ▭ County Boundary

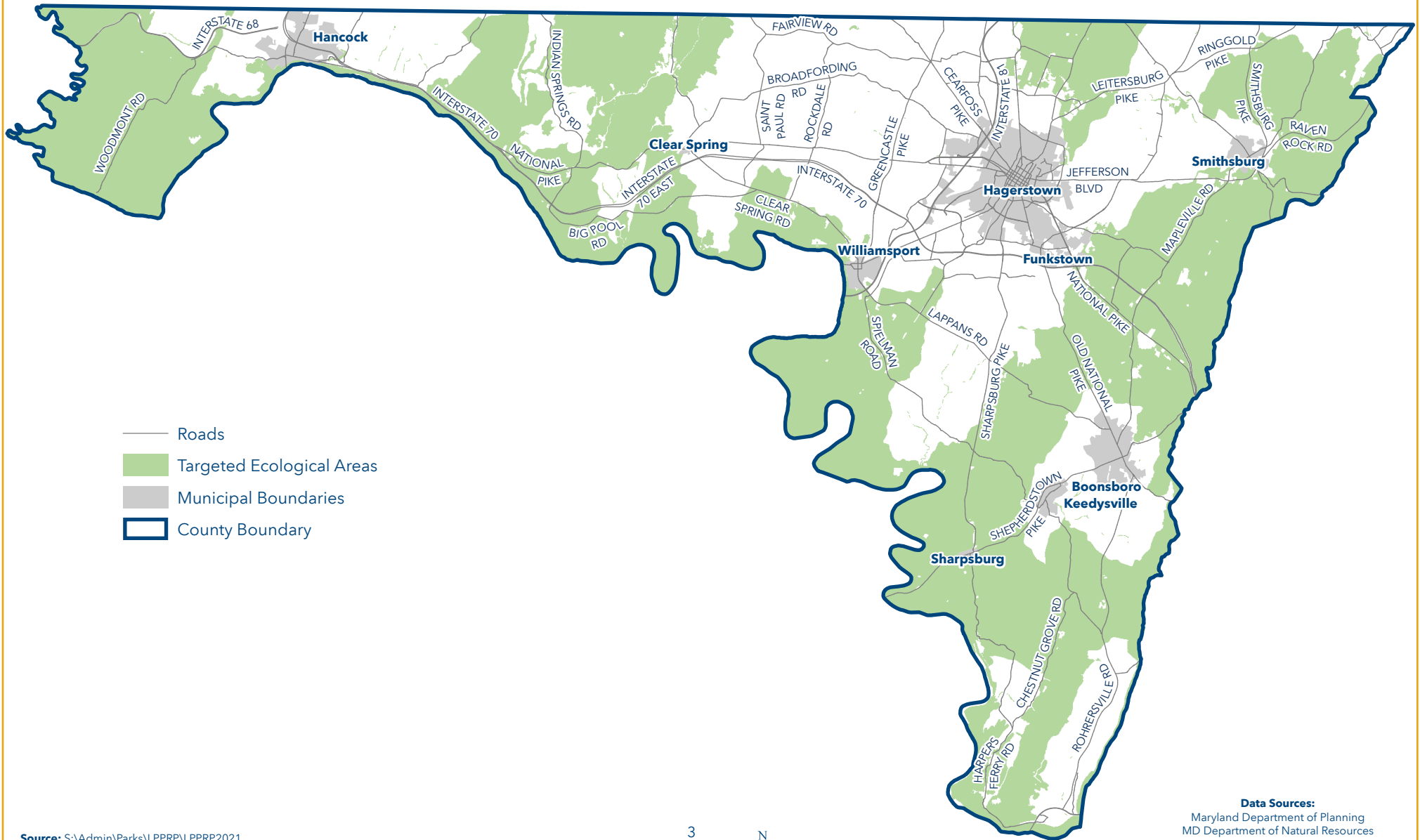
**Source:** S:\Admin\Parks\LPPRP\LPPRP2021  
**Note:** This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes.



**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
**Prepared By:**  
 Washington County Department of Planning and Zoning  
 Geographic Information Systems







- Roads
- Targeted Ecological Areas
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundary

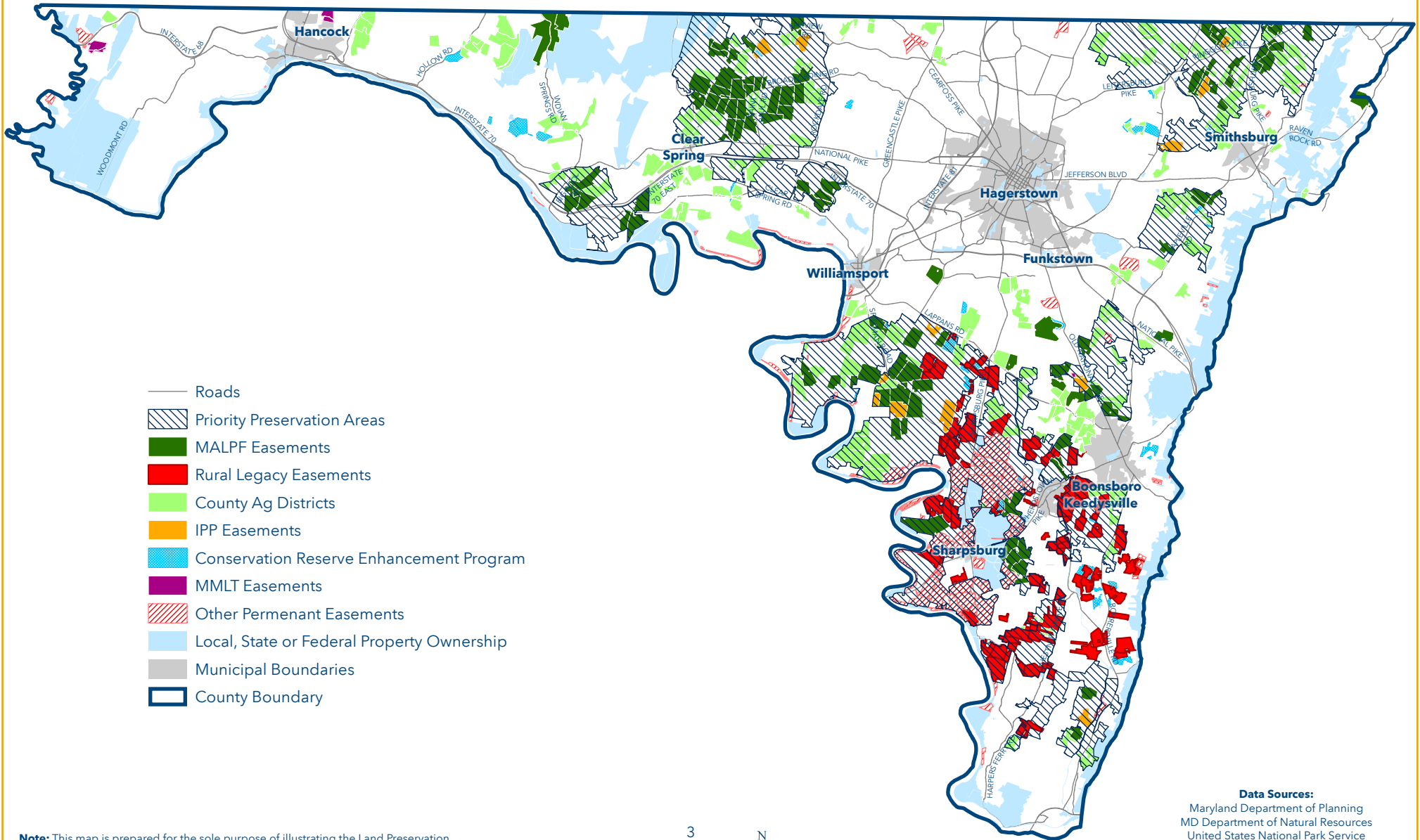
Source: S:\Admin\Parks\LPPRP\LPPRP2021

Note: This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes.



**Data Sources:**  
Maryland Department of Planning  
MD Department of Natural Resources  
**Prepared By:**  
Washington County Department of Planning  
and Zoning  
Geographic Information Systems





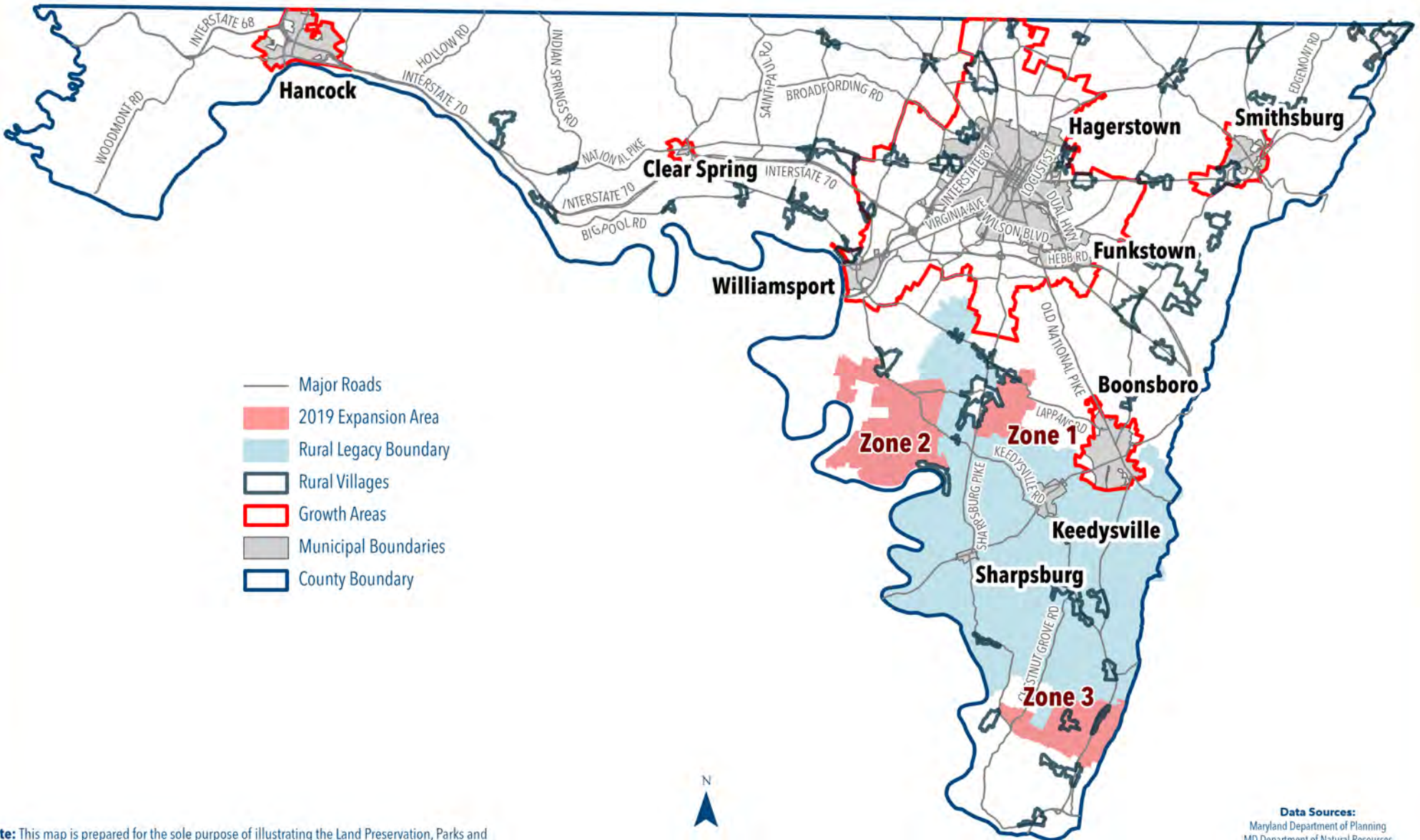
**Note:** This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes.

**Path:** S:\Admin\Parks\LPPRP\LPPRP2021\AgPres.aprx

**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
 United States National Park Service

**Prepared By:**  
 Washington County Department of Planning and Zoning  
 Geographic Information Systems





- Major Roads
- 2019 Expansion Area
- Rural Legacy Boundary
- Rural Villages
- Growth Areas
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundary



5

Miles

**Note:** This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes

**Path:** S:\Admin\Parks\LPPRP\LPPRP2021\LPPRP2021.aprx

**Data Sources:**  
 Maryland Department of Planning  
 MD Department of Natural Resources  
 United States National Park Service

**Prepared By:**  
 Washington County Department of Planning and Zoning  
 Geographic Information Systems



## **Appendix B**

Public Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

Preserved Natural Resource Lands Inventory

Preserved Agricultural Lands Inventory











## C. Inventory of Preserved Agricultural Land

Washington County, Maryland Preserved Agricultural Lands Inventory			
Site Name		Easement Size (Acres)	Protection Type (Ownership or Easement Type)
Bowers, Anna F Gale		154.28	CREP
Engstrom, George And Carol		39.04	CREP
Heimer, Jean And Lane		68.71	CREP
Schooley, David And Patricia		118.52	CREP
Howell, William J		127.45	CREP
Stone, Elmer A. Jr.		150.04	CREP
Salgado, Marie E.		158.44	CREP
Clagett, Virginia		194.04	CREP
Czarra, Edgar F., Jr.		296.57	CREP
Umberger, Paul C And Julia E		58.19	CREP
Weaver, Carl P		169.05	CREP
Stoner Family Farms Llc		81.97	CREP
Wd Farms Llc		107.92	CREP
Cogan Jerilyn J		133.60	CREP
Hammond, Karen And David		100.58	CREP
Kefauver Millard D Iii Et Al		115.65	CREP
David, Edwin E.		89.71	CREP
Weddle, James K Et All And Bonnie J		353.66	CREP
Pleasant Valley Livestock		197.50	CREP
Jarmy Imre T & Jarmy Linda A		12.98	CREP
Long Brooks Lawrence & Long Katherine Lynn		157.61	CREP
Miller Paul F & Patricia B		80.00	CREP
Hopkins Wilmarie F & John H Jr Trustees		202.41	CREP
Horst Keith A & Roseanne		193.61	CREP
KB Farm Properties Llc		126.42	CREP
MC 3220 LLC		81.56	CREP
Philip Draper		67.62	CREP
Daryl Hood		89.39	CREP
Bowes		40.00	Rural Legacy
Shaw		263.20	Rural Legacy
Flook		126.25	Rural Legacy
Price		124.72	Rural Legacy
Price		136.84	Rural Legacy
Flook		279.82	Rural Legacy
Sellers		183.17	Rural Legacy
Macbride		35.79	Rural Legacy
Pearson		97.00	Rural Legacy
Sebold		99.98	Rural Legacy
Ritondo		140.00	Rural Legacy
Huffer		133.57	Rural Legacy
Ecker		110.86	Rural Legacy
Meyers		59.76	Rural Legacy
Poffenberger		185.38	Rural Legacy
Foltz		22.39	Rural Legacy
Heron		131.41	Rural Legacy
Hillenbrand		105.14	Rural Legacy
Morgan		31.77	Rural Legacy
Stone		137.26	Rural Legacy
Czarra		150.02	Rural Legacy
Saville		50.55	Rural Legacy
Mullendore		205.77	Rural Legacy
Morgan		10.00	Rural Legacy
Young		49.04	Rural Legacy
Spoonire		50.65	Rural Legacy
Morgan		20.25	Rural Legacy



Weaver		143.74	Rural Legacy
Morgan		33.37	Rural Legacy
Burtner		108.81	Rural Legacy
Vanfossen/Cogan		20.04	Rural Legacy
W D Farms, Llc		55.83	Rural Legacy
Williamson		118.05	Rural Legacy
Matheny		49.30	Rural Legacy
Alexander; Woodley Farms		155.52	Rural Legacy
Morgan		203.89	Rural Legacy
Traska		53.88	Rural Legacy
Morgan		52.26	Rural Legacy
Hirrlinger		39.80	Rural Legacy
Morgan		139.66	Rural Legacy
Maiorana		57.97	Rural Legacy
Matson		23.70	Rural Legacy
Kefauver-Canfield		44.95	Rural Legacy
Price		33.11	Rural Legacy
Dreisch		91.00	Rural Legacy
Ecker		255.84	Rural Legacy
Ingram		45.96	Rural Legacy
Frye		75.49	Rural Legacy
Mills; Gum Tree Farms		161.41	Rural Legacy
Bonnet		34.15	Rural Legacy
Thomas		204.81	Rural Legacy
Fisher		60.59	Rural Legacy
Payne/Holder		111.53	Rural Legacy
Otto Farm Llc		137.72	Rural Legacy
Burns		91.75	Rural Legacy
Limekiln Road Partnership		315.60	Rural Legacy
Pleasant Valley Livestock		105.36	Rural Legacy
King		142.72	Rural Legacy
Morgan		20.62	Rural Legacy
Coulter		78.89	Rural Legacy
Mccleary		188.00	Rural Legacy
Miller		24.59	Rural Legacy
Benton		201.50	Rural Legacy
Fimhaber		158.16	Rural Legacy
Otzelberger		152.35	Rural Legacy
Kemp		46.16	Rural Legacy
Hoffman		19.81	Rural Legacy
Long		31.25	Rural Legacy
Harbaugh		47.87	Rural Legacy
Hershey		21.60	Rural Legacy
Antietam Farms Llc		61.31	Rural Legacy
Morgan		10.47	Rural Legacy
Velisek		40.99	Rural Legacy
Salamone And Lemaster		95.27	Rural Legacy
Olden		183.67	Rural Legacy
Ziem, Robert And Ruth Along With Karen Bohman, Kurt Ziem And Eric Ziem		53.34	IPP
Elmer T. Cline Farm Inc.		65.00	IPP
Barr, I. Bruce		115.60	IPP
Price Farms, Inc.		253.00	IPP
Clopper, Tricia Bowman And Suzanne Bowman Winders		161.79	IPP
Arena, Anthony		130.20	IPP
Miller, Jay		177.13	IPP
Salgado, Marie		145.68	IPP
Barr, Phyllis		90.78	IPP
Miller, Myron And Fern		71.25	IPP
Newcomer, Katheleen		125.10	IPP
Martin, Myron And Janet		118.17	IPP
Ford		173.90	MALPF



Carr		242.00	MALPF
Harshman		226.70	MALPF
Martin		140.00	MALPF
Ankeney		347.72	MALPF
Ankeney		107.22	MALPF
Weisenbaugh		314.01	MALPF
Hayes		200.60	MALPF
Robbins		446.00	MALPF
Main		142.46	MALPF
Corcoran		158.42	MALPF
Rowland		596.82	MALPF
Ritchie		237.99	MALPF
Byers		164.61	MALPF
Corcoran		150.14	MALPF
Emswiler, Charles		100.00	MALPF
Harp		124.70	MALPF
Harp		150.51	MALPF
Trumpower		123.30	MALPF
Price		149.64	MALPF
Durbin		100.38	MALPF
Niemyer		46.01	MALPF
Litton		145.00	MALPF
Barr		30.00	MALPF
Wiles		191.00	MALPF
Faith		132.63	MALPF
Faith		129.62	MALPF
Stockslager		145.37	MALPF
Lohman		146.00	MALPF
Lohman		146.00	MALPF
Herbst		183.99	MALPF
Herbst		172.12	MALPF
Srite		190.20	MALPF
Long		159.91	MALPF
Churchey		183.01	MALPF
Loudenslager		145.04	MALPF
Barr		70.72	MALPF
Shifler		153.30	MALPF
Roth		111.91	MALPF
Cline		145.25	MALPF
Schultz		70.72	MALPF
Schultz		69.37	MALPF
Worthington		108.92	MALPF
Newcomer		55.50	MALPF
Belz		247.63	MALPF
Newcomer		113.28	MALPF
Downs		118.00	MALPF
Ernst		193.14	MALPF
Downs		130.00	MALPF
Downs		145.00	MALPF
Warner		79.30	MALPF
Belz		135.15	MALPF
Buhrman		179.00	MALPF
Cavanaugh		245.80	MALPF
Winters		57.09	MALPF
Winters		186.14	MALPF
Leather		178.30	MALPF
Rohrer		123.80	MALPF
Hornbaker		107.09	MALPF
Carbaugh		192.22	MALPF
Carbaugh		192.22	MALPF
Taulton		127.38	MALPF



Clark		101.00	MALPF
Shriver		99.81	MALPF
Harding		123.56	MALPF
Cline		253.90	MALPF
Kendle		129.00	MALPF
Stitzel		264.13	MALPF
Myers Jr		151.08	MALPF
Coffman		206.62	MALPF
Coffman		260.00	MALPF
Hunter		68.62	MALPF
Rowland		147.67	MALPF
Michael		210.92	MALPF
Michael		209.01	MALPF
Michael		200.04	MALPF
Carbaugh		144.19	MALPF
Barnhart		148.90	MALPF
Oller		96.80	MALPF
Martin		97.73	MALPF
Beard, Donald		135.51	MALPF
Baker Farms Llc		115.22	MALPF
Schnebly		152.29	MALPF
Worthington		41.14	MALPF
Weddle		353.66	MALPF
Bowers		52.96	MALPF
Seibert		77.03	MALPF
Housers Produce Farm		84.63	MALPF
Keadle		139.06	MALPF
Houser		151.42	MALPF
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27059.61</b>	



## Appendix C

### Parks, Facilities & Recreation Survey Survey Results



## I. Questionnaire

**2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan Survey**

**Park Usage and Recreation Program Usage**

**How close do you live to a park?**

Less than 1 mile     1-3 miles     3-5 miles

5-10 miles     More than 10 miles

**How frequently do you visit a park?**

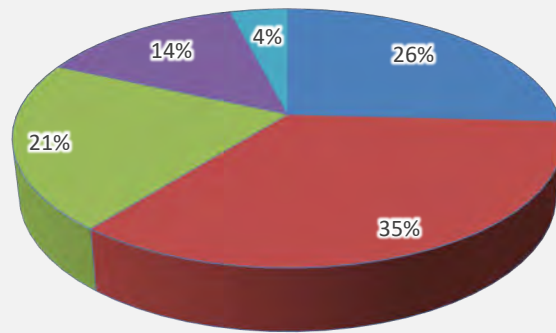
Daily     Weekly     Monthly     Rarely

**Which County parks and/or recreation facilities do you use?**  
Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Education Center	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCC at HCC	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Rock Golf Course
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Harding Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Chestnut Grove Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear Spring Park
<input type="checkbox"/> Devil's Backbone Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Doub's Woods Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruth Ann Monroe Primary
<input type="checkbox"/> Kemps Mill Park	<input type="checkbox"/> MLK Rec Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Marty Snook Memorial

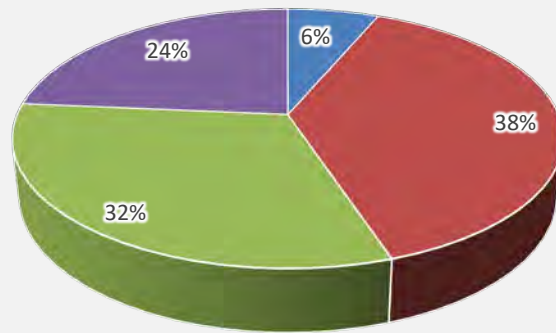


### Question 1: Park Proximity



■ < 1 miles ■ 1 to 3 miles ■ 3 to 5 miles ■ 5 to 10 miles ■ 10+ miles

### Question 2: Park Visitation Frequency



■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ Rarely



### Question 3: Parks Visited Most Often



### Question 4: Parks Facilities Used Most Often

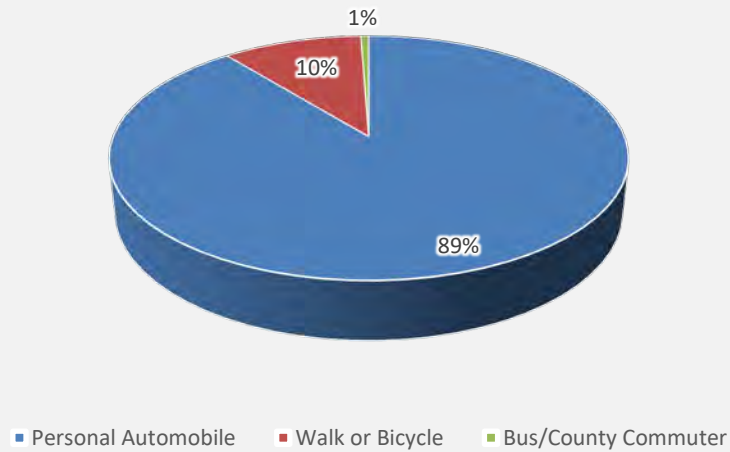




## Question 5: New Park Facilities Desired



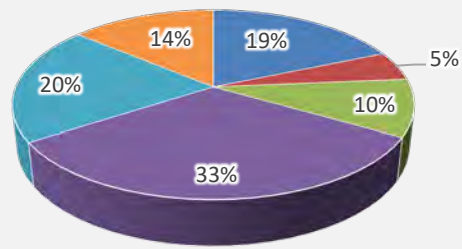
## Question 6: Travel Mode to Parks & Rec Facilites





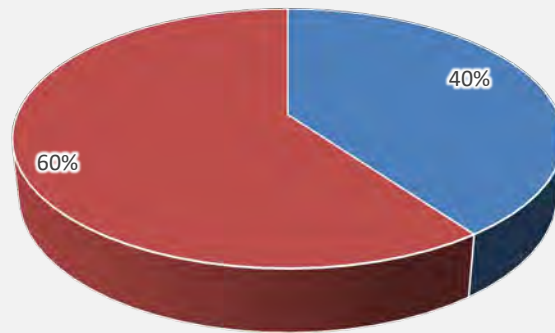


### Question 7: Obstacles Preventing Park/Facility Usage



- Transportation or Distance to Nearest Park/Facility
- Cost of Facilities or Services
- Hours of Operation
- Lack of Preferred Amenities
- Safety Concerns
- Other

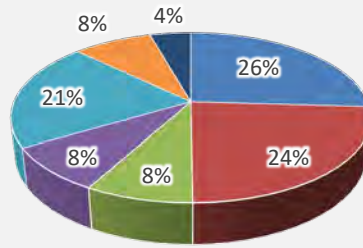
### Question 8: Recreation Program Participation



- Yes
- No

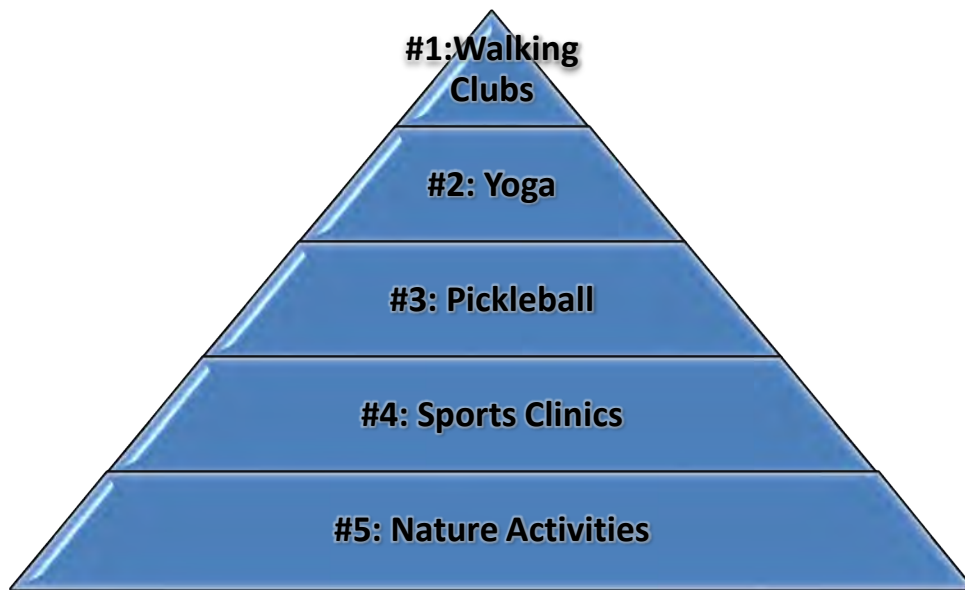


### Question 9: Recreation Program Participation



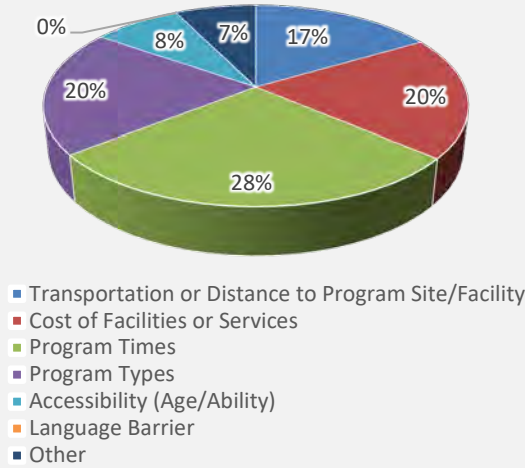
- Adult Fitness Programs
- Youth Sports/Clinics
- High School Sport Programs
- Youth Summer Day Camps
- Special Events
- Swimming Lessons
- Other

### Question 10: New Recreation Programs Desired

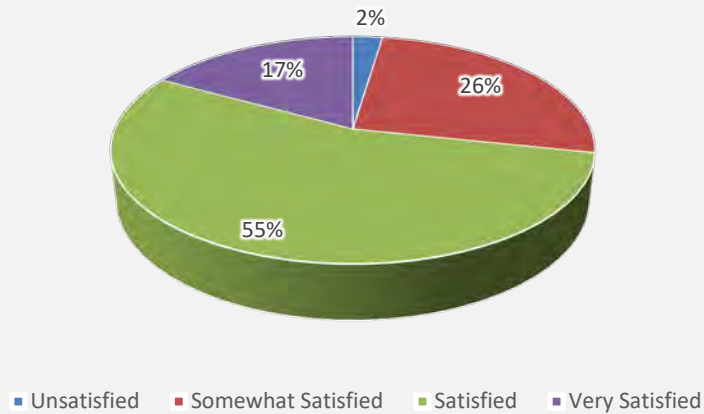




### Question 11: Recreation Program Attendance Obstacles

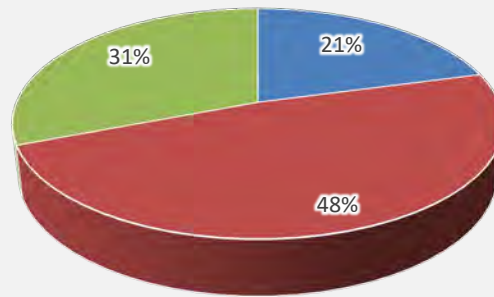


### Question 12: Satisfaction With Existing Parks and Recreation Programs, Facilities and Services



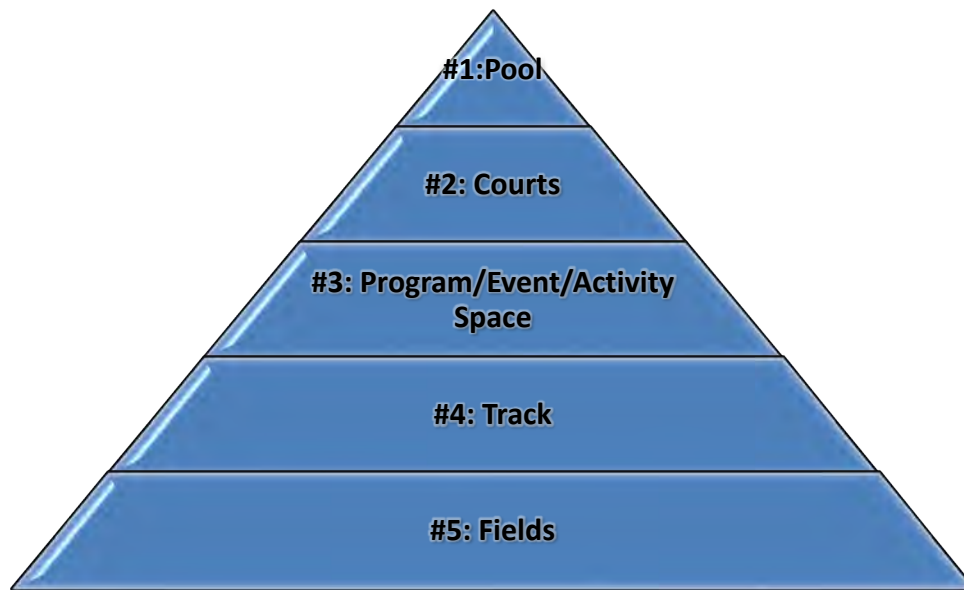


### Question 13: Fiscal Priorities for Parks System



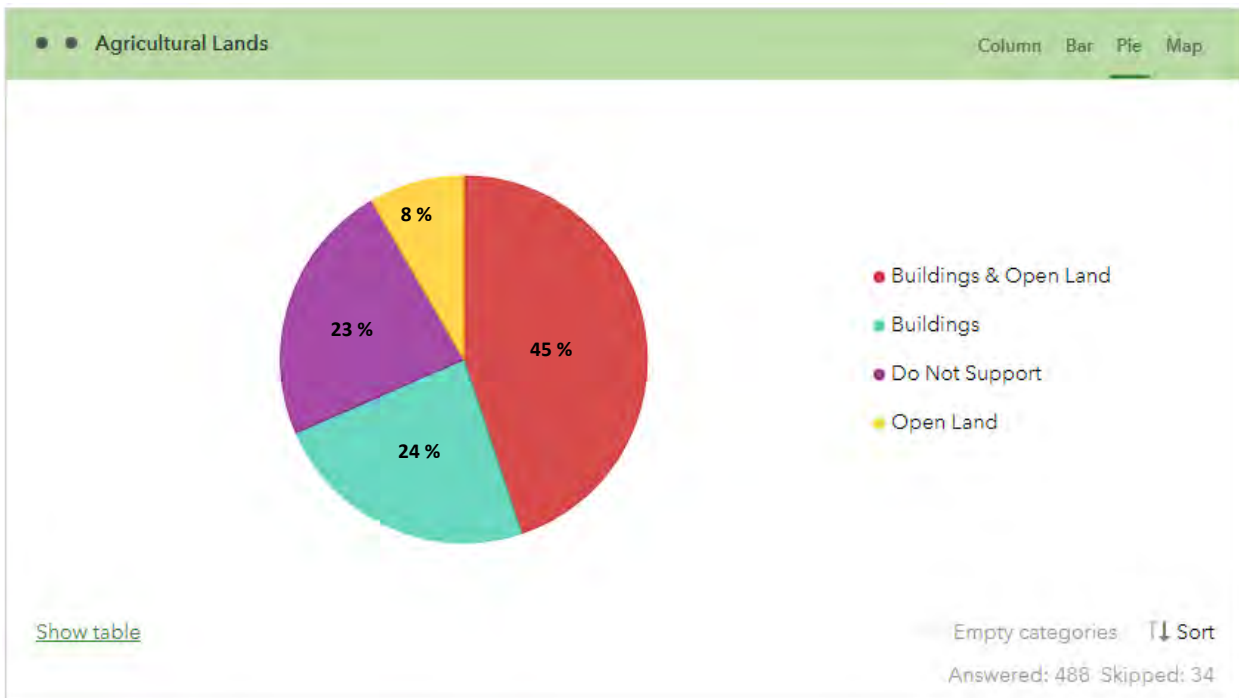
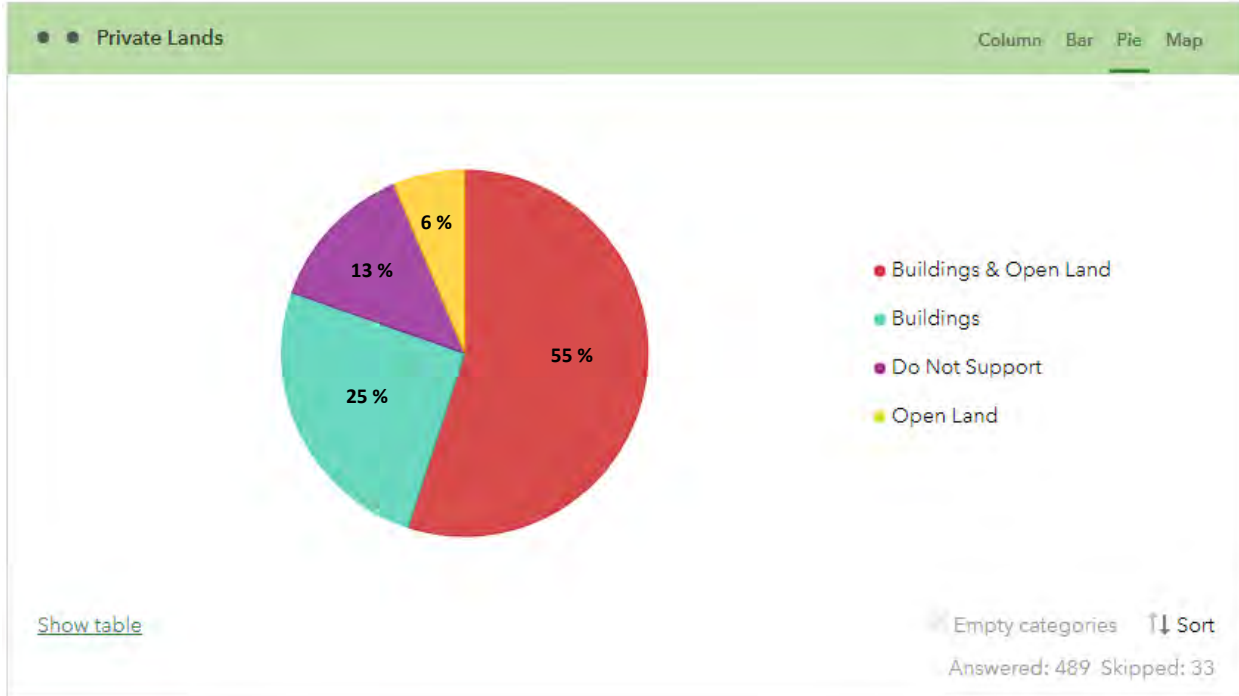
- Maintain Existing Facilities
- New Amenities at Existing Facilities
- Expand Parks System

### Question 14: Amenities Desired in New Indoor Recreation Facility

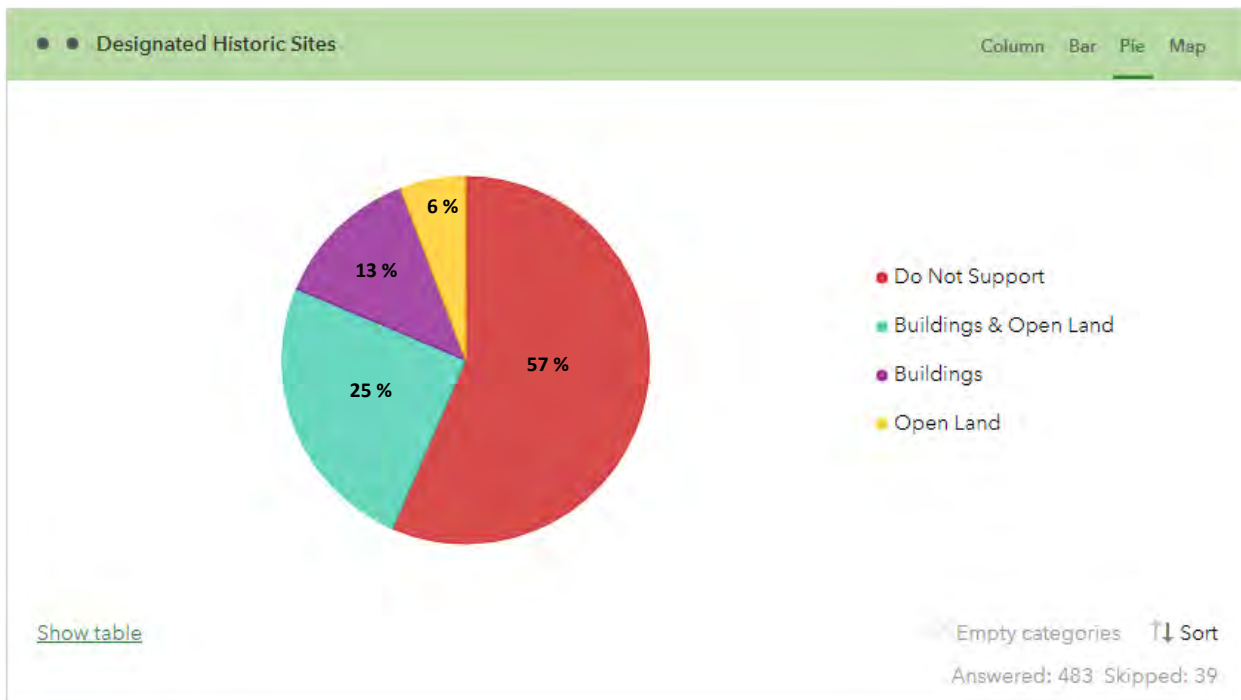
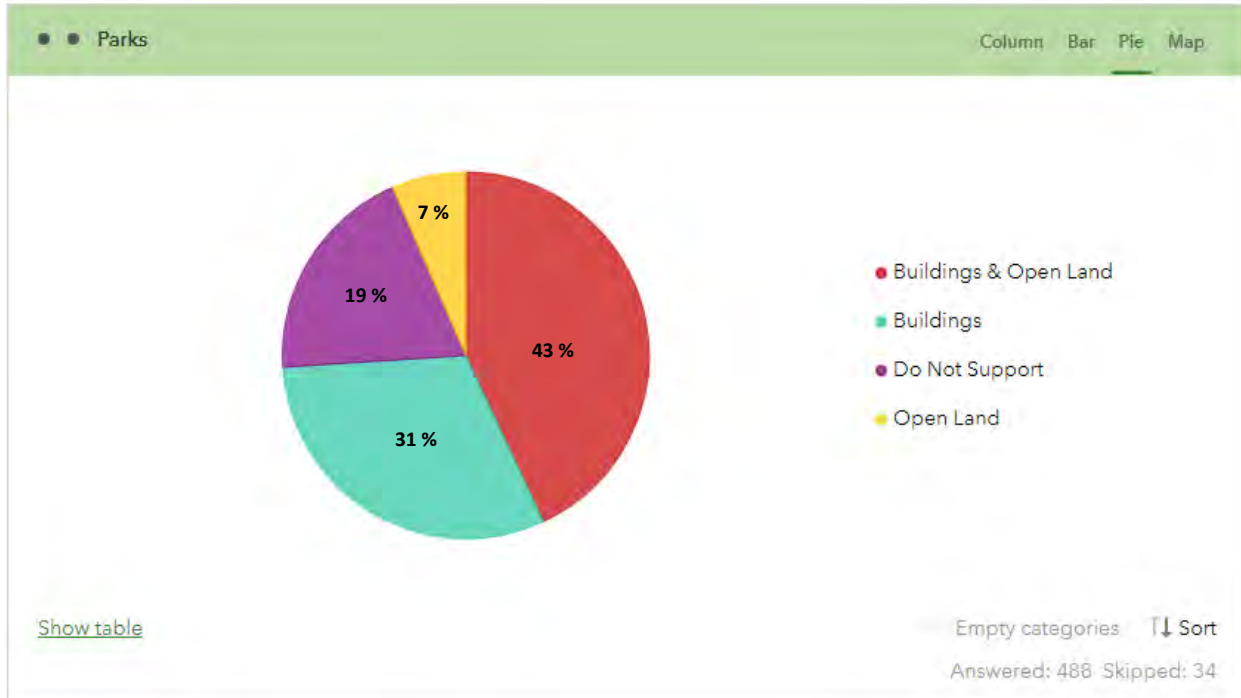


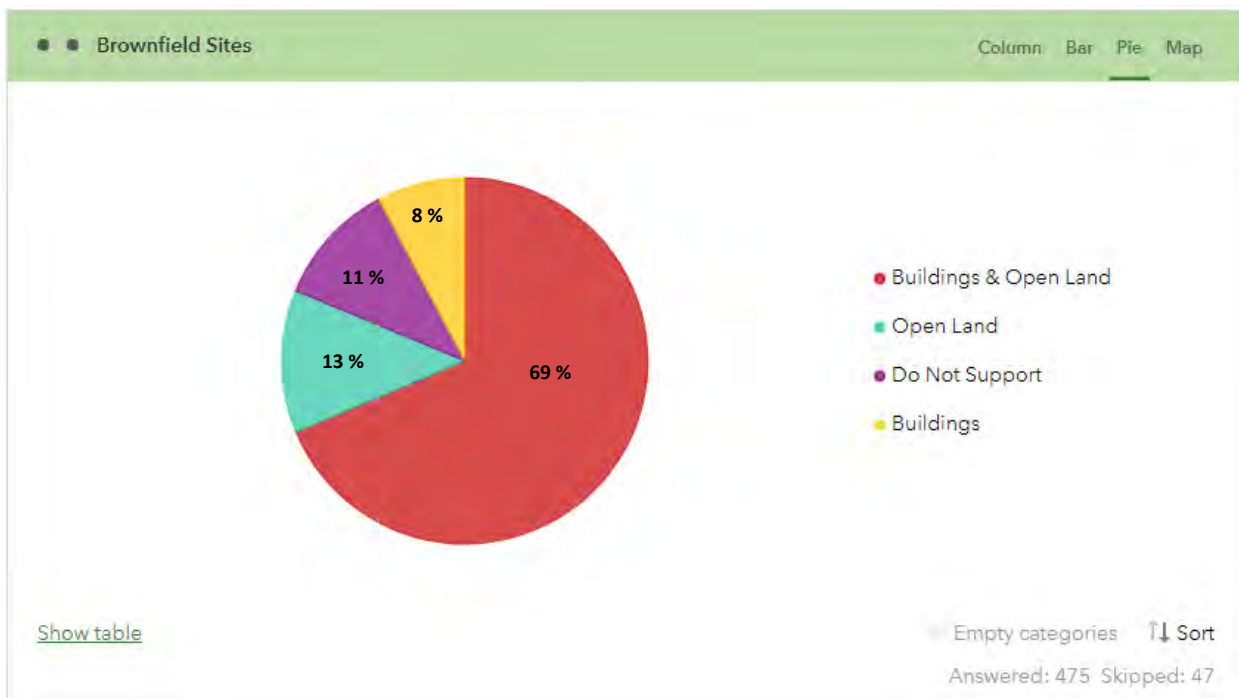
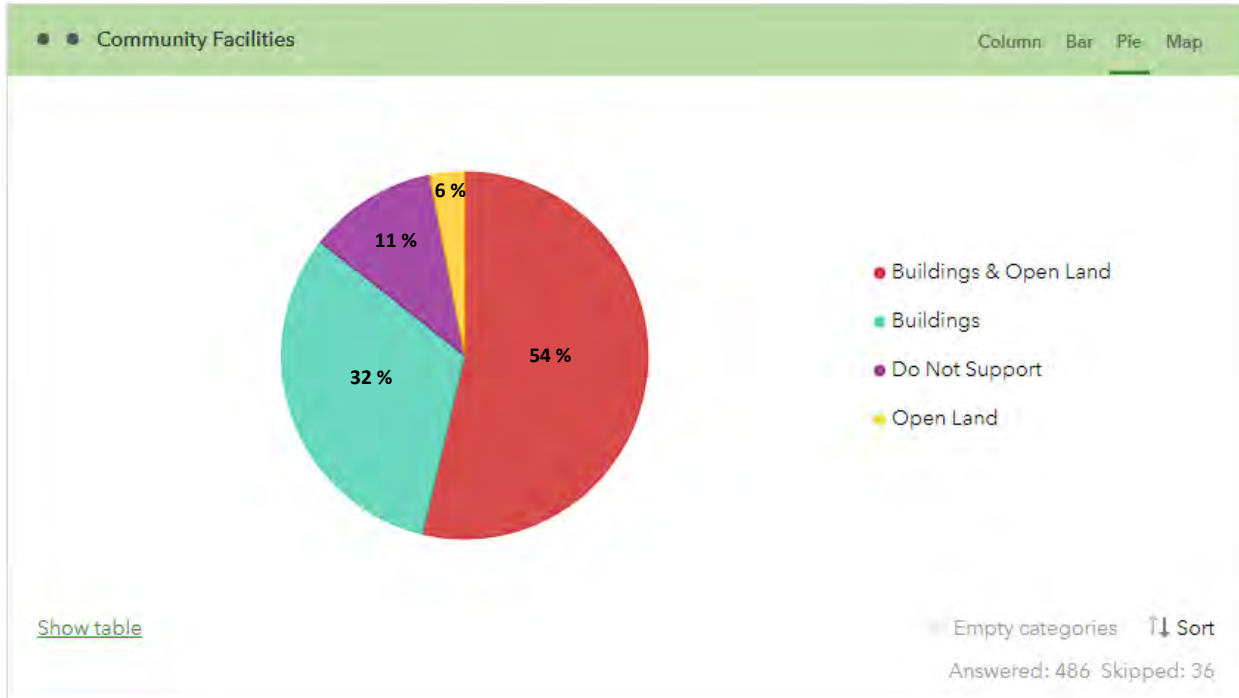


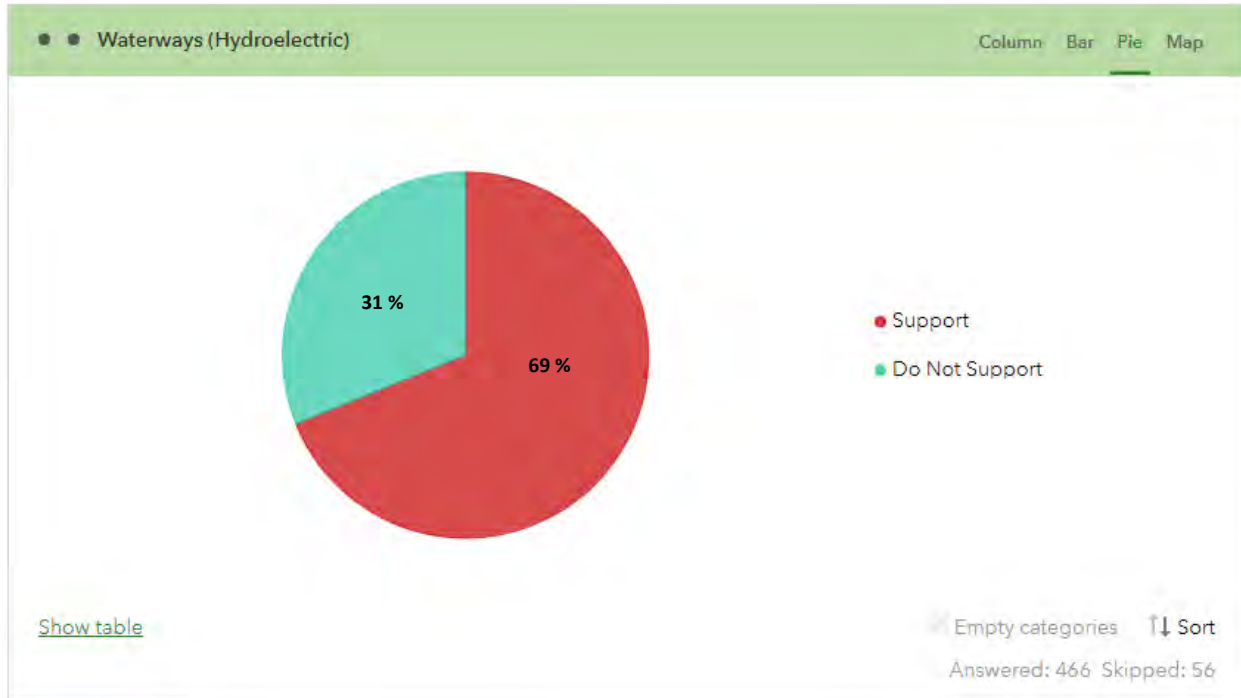
### Question 15: Do you support the creation of renewable energy generating systems on the following types of lands?



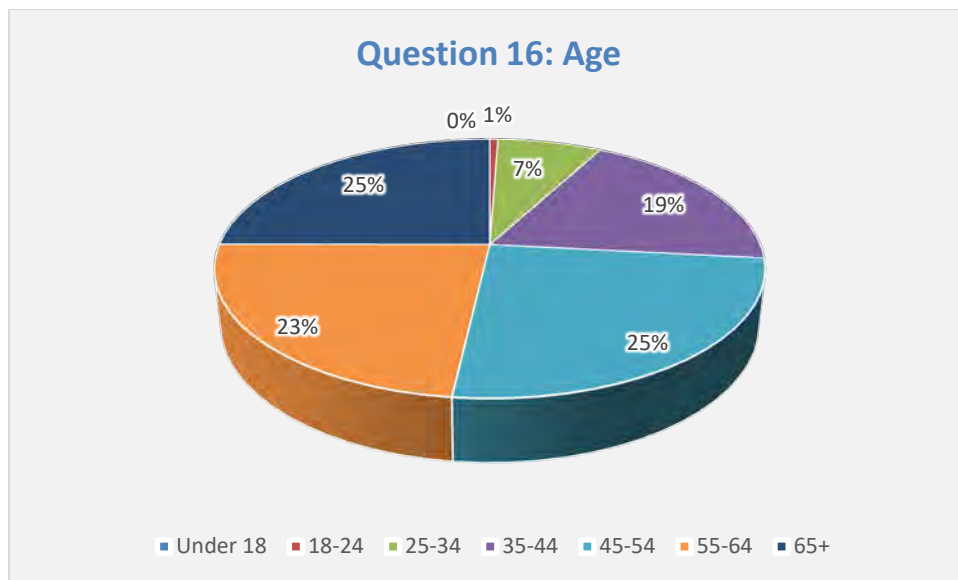






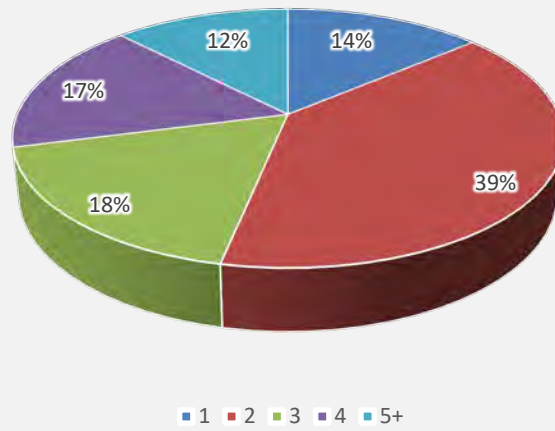


## A. Demographic Questions

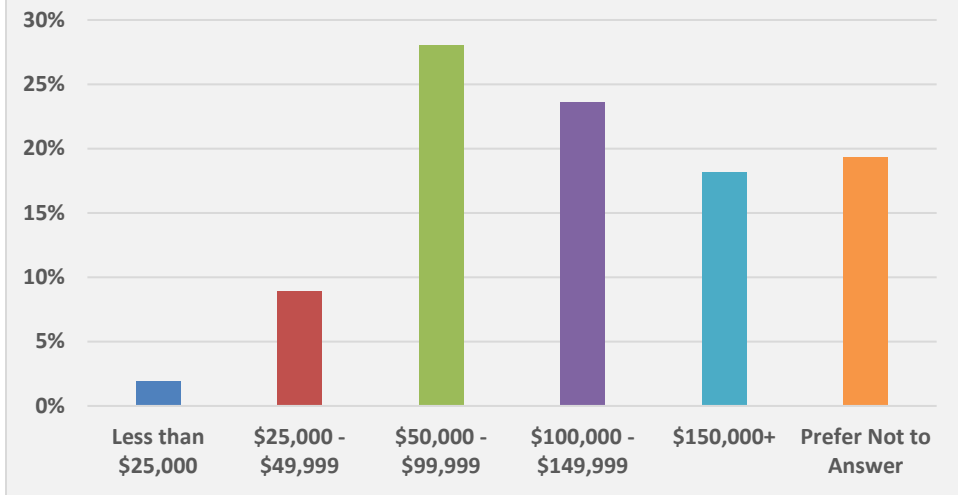




### Question 17: Household Size

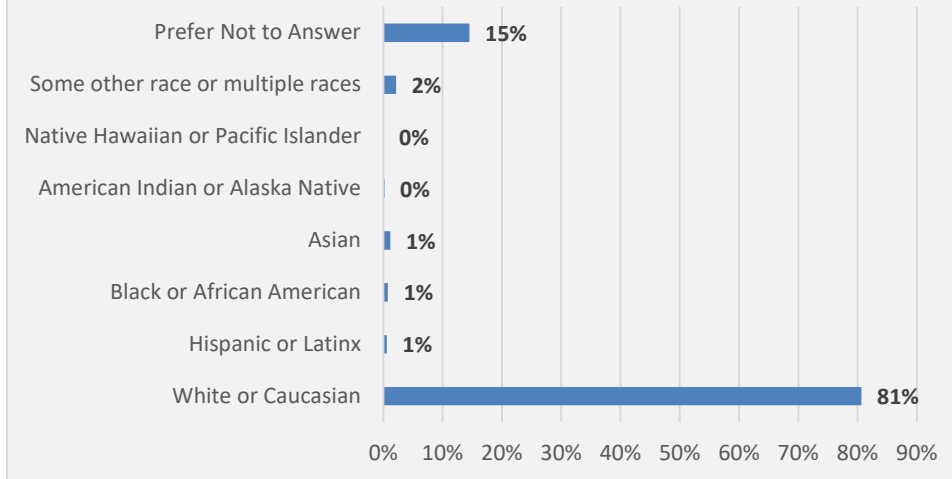


### Question 18: Household Income





### Question 19: Race or Ethnicity



### Question 20: Zip Code

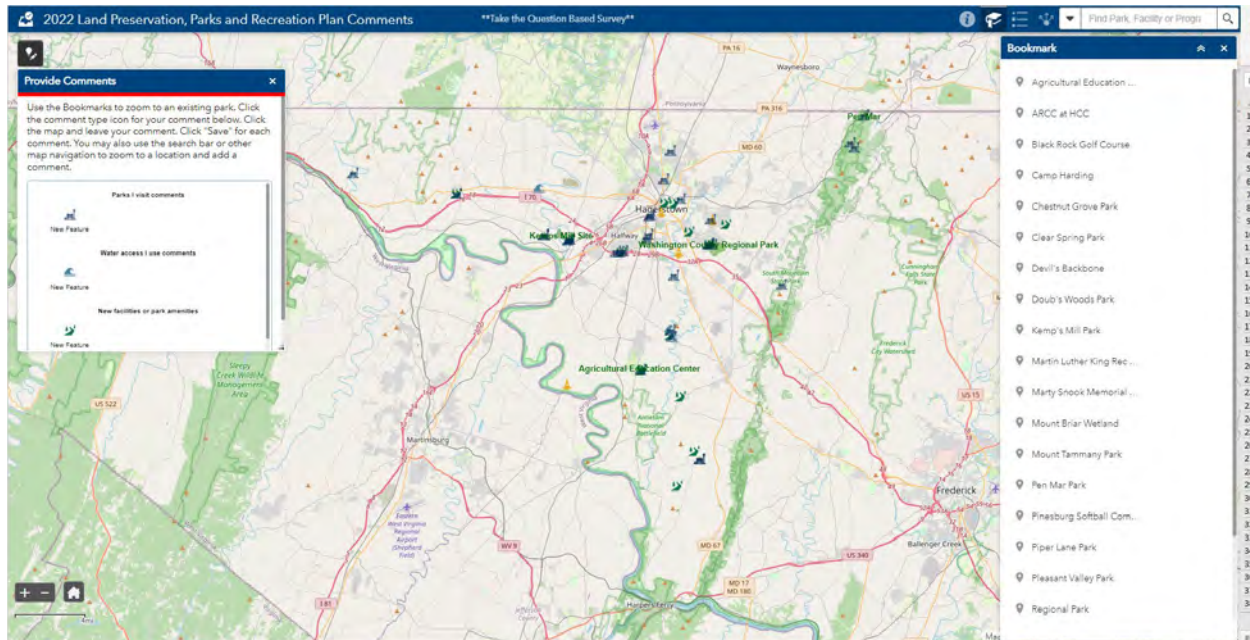
<u>Response Count</u>	<u>% of Total Responses</u>	<u>Responses</u>
3	1%	21750
176	34%	21740
41	8%	21795
36	7%	21713
118	23%	21742
4	1%	21758
12	2%	21756
18	4%	21782
26	5%	21783
1	0%	10346
28	5%	21722
5	1%	21734
11	2%	21779
3	1%	21711
4	1%	21719
5	1%	21733
5	1%	21767
1	0%	21715
1	0%	10908
5	1%	21733
1	0%	17923
2	0%	17236
1	0%	13437
2	0%	17268





	1	0%	13929
	2	0%	17225
	1	0%	11533
	1	0%	11206
<b>Total</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100%</b>	

## II. Mapped Survey



### A. Comment Category: Parks I Visit

Location	Count	Visitation Frequency	Amenities Used
Camp Harding	1	Occasionally	Courts, Water
Clear Spring Park	1	Frequently	Courts, Walking/Trails
Marty Snook	3	Rarely	Courts, Walking/Trails
Doubs Woods	2	Occasionally	Sports Leagues
Pinesburg	3	Rarely	Sports Leagues
HCC	1	Occasionally	Walking/Trails
Devils Backbone	2	Occasionally	Picnic, Water Access (Fishing, Boating)
Doubs Woods	1	Occasionally	Picnic, Natural Areas
Marty Snook	1	Occasionally	Fields, Walking/Trails
Ag Center	1	Occasionally	Events, Historic/Educational
Regional	3	Frequently	
City Park	2	Occasionally	



South Mtn SP (Thurston Griggs Trail)	2	Occasionally	Walking/Trails
Regional	1	Frequently	Playground
Pinesburg	2	Occasionally	
Mt. Briar Wetland	2	Rarely	
City Park	1	Occasionally	
Pangborn	1	Occasionally	
South Mtn SP (High Rock)	1	Occasionally	Natural Area
Western MD Hospital Center	1	Frequently	Natural Area, Walking/Trail, Exercise Equipment
Pen Mar	1	Frequently	
Devils Backbone	1	Occasionally	
Rose's Mill	1	Occasionally	Parking
Mt. Briar Wetland	1	Occasionally	Walking/Trails
Regional	1	Frequently	
Marty Snook	1	Frequently	Exercise Equipment, Playground (Marty's Mythical Woods)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>		

## B. Comment Category: New Facilities or Park Amenities

Location	Amenity Category
Clear Spring Park	Trail (Walking)
Weverton/Roxbury Rail Corridor	Trail (Multi-Use)
Devils Backbone	Trail (Hiking)
RAMP	Rec Program
Fountainhead North	Park
South Mtn SP (Cascade)	Trail
South Mtn SP (Thurston Griggs Trail)	Trail (Signage)
Woodbridge	Park
Downtown Hagerstown	Park
Wilson Bridge	Water Access
Pinesburg	Trail (Walking)
Pinesburg	Fields (Soccer)
Pinesburg	Restrooms



<b>Weverton/Roxbury Rail Corridor</b>	Trail (Multi-Use)
<b>Regional</b>	Courts (Tennis)
<b>Weverton/Roxbury Rail Corridor</b>	Trail (Multi-Use)
<b>Regional</b>	Trail (Walking)
<b>Ag Center</b>	Event Facility
<b>Rose's Mill</b>	Parking
<b>Fairgrounds</b>	Fields (Football)
<b>Regional</b>	Recycling, Water Bottle Refill

### C. Comment Category: Safety Concerns

Location	Category
<b>Thomas Kennedy Park</b>	Maintenance
<b>South Mtn. SP (High Rock)</b>	Safety/Access/Operating Hours
<b>HCC</b>	Maintenance
<b>Funkstown Park</b>	Lighting
<b>C&amp;O Canal (Dam 4 - Rd &amp; Boat Launch)</b>	Safety

### D. Comment Category: Water Access Used

Location	Category
<b>Wilson Bridge</b>	Occasionally
<b>Devils Backbone/Antietam Creek</b>	Frequently
<b>C&amp;O Canal (Dam 4 - Rd &amp; Boat Launch)</b>	Safety

### E. Comment Category: Other (Comment Did Not Fall Under Other Category Choices)

Location	Category
<b>Regional Park</b>	Use/Capacity
<b>Mt. Briar Wetland</b>	Operating Hours/Public Access
<b>City Park</b>	Maintenance
<b>Devils Backbone</b>	Public Access
<b>Ag Center</b>	Public Access



<b>Marty Snook</b>	Public Access
<b>Mt. Briar Wetland</b>	Public Access